University of Alberta

The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski

by

Frank Kwantat Ho ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Music

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 2000

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Acquisitions et services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-59725-3

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Frank Kwantat Ho

Title of Thesis: The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski

Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 2000

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly of scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

#304, 9905 - 112 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1L6 Canada

July 13, 2000

ABSTRACT

One of the most important segments of Karol Szymanowski's (1882-1937) comparatively small output is the music for solo violin with piano or orchestral accompaniment. These works, consisting of two concertos and six chamber pieces, cover all the major periods of Szymanowski's career and thus show the composer's stylistic evolution.

The works Szymanowski's early period (1896-1909) reveal his Romantic roots, while the more innovative works of the middle period (1909-1918) demonstrate his growing interest in Impressionism. The most important works of this period are the *Mythes* and the First Violin Concerto. The last period (1920-1934) is characterized by an interest in Polish folk music.

Concomitant with this stylistic evolution is the development of a novel, yet idiomatic, approach to writing for the violin. This "new mode of expression for the violin," as it was called by the composer, was based on pre-exisiting idioms, and is most apparent in the middle period music. This thesis traces both the stylistic and violinistic lines of Szymanowski's development through analysis and comparison.

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski , by Frank Kwantat Ho in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Michael T. Roeder

Paul Jelen

Tanya Prochazka

Date: July 13, 2000

To my parents, for their love and support over the years

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: Background 4

Chapter 2: Late Romantic Beginnings--The Sonata, Op. 9, and Romance, Op. 23 19

Chapter 3: The Masterpieces of the Impressionist Period (I)--Nocturne and Tarantella, Op. 28, and *Mity*, Op. 30 37

Chapter 4: The Masterpieces of the Impressionist Period (II)--Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, and Three Paganini Caprices, Op. 40 73

Chapter 5: The Nationalist Period--Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61 102

Conclusion 119

Bibliography 125

INTRODUCTION

Both during his lifetime and shortly after his death, Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) was regarded as the most important Polish composer after Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849). Yet among the major composers of the early part of the twentieth century, Szymanowski has garnered comparatively little attention outside his native country. In his book about twentieth-century musicians, Mark Morris finds this situation puzzling:

> The relative obscurity of the music of Karol Szymanowski seems quite inexplicable. No one has ever exceeded him for the sheer intensity of sensuous, ecstatic beauty, and of his limited number of works (69 opus numbers), at least three would seem to have all the requirements to maintain a firm hold on the hearts of musiclovers.[1]

In recent years, the situation has improved somewhat. New recordings of Szymanowski's music have been produced, some of them, encouragingly enough, comprehensive in scope.

Musicological studies of Szymanowski, however, seem relatively scarce by comparison. Since his death in 1937, a number of biographies in Polish have appeared, but serious work on his music has lagged behind. To date, Jim Samson's excellent 1980 book remains the only comprehensive study in English on the music of Szymanowski.[2] This is unusual given the generally high quality of his *oeuvre* and the wide range of genres it covers. Among the

---

[1] Mark Morris, *A Guide to 20th Century Composers* (London: Methuen London, 1996), 301.
[2] Jim Samson, *The Music of Szymanowski* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1980).

more significant works are four symphonies, two operas, two violin concertos, two string quartets, a violin sonata, three piano sonatas, a ballet, and three major choral works. In addition, there are numerous solo piano pieces, several shorter works for violin and piano, and numerous sets of songs.

This thesis is a modest contribution to the literature on Karol Szymanowski's music. It will focus on all of his music for solo violin with piano or orchestral accompaniment. The works to be studied are:

Sonata in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 9 (1904);
Romance in D major for Violin and Piano, Op. 23 (1910);
Mity (Mythes): 3 Poems for Violin and Piano, Op. 30 (1915);
Nocturne and Tarantella for Violin and Piano, Op. 28 (1915);
Concerto No. 1 in A minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35 (1916);
Three Paganini Caprices for Violin and Piano, Op. 40 (1918);
La berceuse d'Aïtacho Enia for Violin and Piano, Op. 52 (1925);
Concerto No. 2 in A minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 61 (1932-33).

This list represents a sizeable and important segment of the composer's relatively small output. Furthermore, almost all of these works were written for, or in collaboration with, Szymanowski's good friend, the violinist Pavel Kochanski (1887-1934).

In the discussion that follows, two lines of the composer's development will be pursued: first, the stylistic evolution of Szymanowski's art, from the

earliest to the latest work on this list; and, second, the development of the writing for the violin, which was aided by Kochanski and resulted in a style that has had an impact on other twentieth-century composers. Both lines will be traced in general terms in chapter one; the analyses of the music from chapters two to five will further elucidate, in some detail, Szymanowski's artistic development and his handling of violinistic idioms. As a preamble to all of this, we shall briefly look at his life and career.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

This chapter serves to place Szymanowski's music in some perspective. It is divided into three parts. Part one is a brief biographical sketch of the composer's life. Part two deals with Szymanowski's development as a composer, focusing on what I consider the most salient points regarding his three stylistic periods. This background will be sufficient to serve as a general guide to the music under discussion. Part three is more specific to the topic of the thesis. It deals with Szymanowski's claim that he, in collaboration with the violinist Pavel Kochanski, created a "new mode of expression for the violin." To what extent is this claim accurate? It will be seen that this "new mode" was not entirely new *per se*, for its antecedents stretch back into the 19th century. Yet at the same time, Szymanowski's statement does carry validity in that the application of these already existing techniques was indeed novel.

Biographical Sketch

Karol Szymanowski was born on 6 October 1882 in the village of Timashovka, Ukraine, the second of five children. He began piano lessons at the age of seven, studying first with his father and later, in 1896, moving to the nearby town of Elisavetgrad, where he continued lessons under the tutelage of his uncle, Gustav Neuhaus. His interest in composition dates from around this time; the music of the late Romantics was a particular source of inspiration for him.

In 1901, Szymanowski moved to Warsaw for regular musical studies and spent the next four years there. As a part-time student at the Warsaw Conservatory (where he would later serve as its director), he studied composition with Zygmunt Noskowski and piano with Marek Zawirski. It was Noskowski who encouraged Szymanowski's gift for composition; his earliest published works date from around this period. Also at this time, Szymanowski met two performers who would play key roles in the creation and promotion of his music: the pianist Artur Rubinstein (1886-1982) and the violinist Pavel Kochanski (1887-1934).

In 1905, Szymanowski joined several young Polish composers to form an association known as "Young Poland in Music." Influenced by a similarly named contemporary movement in Polish literature[1], the group sought to encourage and promote the creation, performance and publication of new Polish music. The association lasted six years. Most of Szymanowski's earliest major works were written during these years, and the promotion of his music took him to the major centres of Europe, including London, Leipzig, Vienna, and Dresden.

The years encompassing the First World War, roughly from 1909 to 1919, saw the greatest growth and productivity of Szymanowski's career. Three journeys abroad (to Italy in 1909, Sicily in 1910, and North Africa in 1914) were influential in the formation of his "Impressionist" style. His fascination with the

[1] The parallel literary movement was called "Young Poland in Literature," and it consisted of young writers with a progressive outlook and a quasi-bohemian lifestyle.

exotic cultures of these places, in combination with his awareness of the most progressive movements in contemporary French music, helped to break down some of the late Romantic idioms that dominated Szymanowski's musical thinking up to this point. His "Impressionist" phase was spent in Timashovka, where Szymanowski produced his most famous works, notably the *Mythes* for violin and piano, the Third Symphony, the First Violin Concerto, the First String Quartet, and numerous piano pieces.

At the end of the war, Szymanowski moved to a newly united Poland, settling in Warsaw in 1919. For the next decade, he concentrated not only on composition, but also on education. In 1926, he was made Director of the Warsaw Conservatory; this position proved to be a frustrating experience, for Szymanowski's strong ideas about musical education ran against those of his more conservative colleagues. He resigned the post in 1929. In 1930, he received two important awards from Poland, the Polish State Prize for Music and an honorary PhD from the University of Cracow. Szymanowski was also made Rector of the newly formed State Academy of Music in Warsaw, but was dismissed from this post two years later by the Minister of Education, who disbanded the Academy.

The years 1933 to 1937 were not happy ones for Szymanowski, mainly due to serious financial problems. Forced to raise money for both himself and members of his family, the composer began a series of concert tours as a pianist during these last years of his life. The tours, which took him to Spain, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, and England, to name only a few countries, did little to

alleviate Szymanowski's financial ills. More disheartening was the fact that he had very little time to compose; the Second Violin Concerto (1934) was his last major work, after which he ceased to write anything of substance. Furthermore, the concert tours strained his health, which was rapidly deteriorating. Towards the end of 1936, Szymanowski was diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis and was given no more than six months to live. He was transferred to a clinic in Lausanne where he died on 29 March 1937. The Polish Government held a state funeral in his honor during the first week of April, 1937. Thousands turned out to pay their respects to this man they considered the most important Polish composer after Chopin.

Stylistic Considerations

Szymanowski's compositional career can be neatly and conveniently divided into three periods. The first period, from 1896 to 1909, can be identified as his "Romantic" period, reflecting the dominant influence of 19th-century Romantic trends. This was followed by an "Impressionist" period (1909-1918), which marks the summit of his career and to which his most notable compositions belong. His final phase, from 1920 to 1933, shows an attempt to synthesize Polish folkloristic musical elements with Western art music, and has been referred to as Szymanowski's "Nationalist" period. (The years 1918-1920 and 1933-1937 are omitted because no music was written during those times.)

Romanticism (1896-1909)

Szymanowski's earliest compositions can be broken down into three categories: solo piano music, songs, and larger instrumental compositions. The first group is by far the largest, comprised of mostly miniature pieces cast in distinctly 19th-century forms such as the prélude, mazurka, and étude. Songs for high voice and piano are also abundant in the early period; no less than six sets were written during these years, most of them set to Polish poetry. More extended works in older, traditional forms figure less significantly. The First Piano Sonata (1903-4), the Violin Sonata (1904-5), the Concert Overture (1904), the First Symphony (1906-7), and a lost Piano Trio (1907) represent the sum total of Szymanowski's early large-scale efforts.

An unabashedly Romantic spirit runs through all the works in each of these groups. The influence of Chopin and Scriabin, and to a lesser degree Brahms, can be felt in the piano music, while the songs bow to the achievements of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf. In the large-scale compositions of this period, Szymanowski drew on a wider range of influences. The orchestral techniques of Richard Strauss and Wagner color much of the incomplete First Symphony as well as the festive Concert Overture. The Violin Sonata, as will be seen in the next chapter, owes much to César Franck and Brahms. And the ambitious, four-movement First Piano Sonata falls in line with those of Beethoven and Brahms.

As with most composers in the early part of their careers, Szymanowski was at this point seeking mastery of his art, and to this end it is not surprising to find him emulating others. Though the music from these early years does not as yet show a great degree of individuality, the seeds of a more personal style are already present. One of them, ironically, is emulation. For Szymanowski, the way to individualism was through the musical influence of other composers, as Samson has noted.[2] Szymanowski went on to achieve a distinct style that incorporated the best elements of Romanticism and Impressionism.

The tendency to emulate others, however, is rather marked at this stage of his career. The proximity of Szymanowski's own music to his models is quite close, as can be seen when one compares parts of the Violin Sonata with those of Franck and Brahms. In terms of harmony, form, and texture, these early works are clearly derived from 19th-century examples. The harmonic language is in the *fin de siecle* vein, but always within a strong tonal framework. Structurally, Szymanowski adopted clear formal patterns which at times incorporated cyclical procedures. He is mainly a miniaturist at this point, although his attempts at larger-scaled works show a desire to master the intricacies of these forms. Texturally, the works exhibit a strong homophonic streak, although contrapuntal passages permeate parts of the First Piano Sonata and the Violin Sonata.

---

[2] Samson, *The music of Szymanowski*, 79. Samson opines that "It seems that Szymanowski *needed* some kind of musical model as a stimulus to his own imagination."

The use of homophony points toward another characteristic pervasive in almost all of Szymanowski's music, namely the emphasis on lyricism. It is safe to say that melody was an integral part of the composer's artistic muse. It finds prominence in these early works, judging by the high number of songs produced during this time as well as the melodic interest inherent in the instrumental works. This emphasis on lyricism was, according to Samson, rooted in the belief that

> music was above all an elevated, ecstatic expression of the emotions, and this attitude prevailed until his expressionist crisis at the end of the [First World] war and even to some extent survived *that*.[3]

Impressionism (1909-1918)

The ties to Romanticism remained prevalent until Szymanowski's sojourns to Italy and North Africa began in 1909. Stimulated by the "exotic" cultures he experienced on these trips, he began to incorporate their musical traits into his music. But the inclusion of these elements necessitated a change of musical style, and for this Szymanowski used the most progressive composers in France at the time--Debussy (1862-1918) and Ravel (1875-1937)--as his models. Not surprisingly, the second period of Szymanowski's career has been labelled "Impressionist" to reflect his new compositional style.

The Impressionistic elements are most noticeable by the fact that almost all of these works bear descriptive titles (e.g., *Masques, Métopes, Mythes*),

---

[3] Ibid., 207.

suggesting the influence of Debussy. In addition, like the French composer, Szymanowski recreated the "exotic" world within the parameters of Western art music. To this end, he employed several techniques typical of Debussy. A freer harmonic language (for example, the use of bitonality, and harmonies based on fourths and fifths) replaced traditional tonality and harmony, both important components of Szymanowski's earlier compositional style. Structurally, some of the works are cast in much looser forms, at times approaching the rhapsodic. Yet despite these notable changes, the term "Impressionist" does not adequately describe Szymanowski's music from this period, for vestiges of Romanticism remain. The emphasis on melody, so marked in the early works, continues to permeate these middle-period compositions. If anything, the "Impressionist" works are characterized by a heightened sense of expression, as can be heard, for example, in the climactic section of the First Violin Concerto; the passage is closer in style to a late Romantic symphonic work than to, say, Debussy's *Prélude d'après midi d'une Faune* (1892-94). Therefore, "Impressionism," when applied to the music of Szymanowski, comes with certain qualifications. As Adam Walacinski points out:

> [the] definition ["Impressionism"] is . . . only a convention, since these new tendencies having passed through the prism of the composer's completely formed creative personality, and combined with the modified elements of his sound language used until then, produced a peculiar stylistic alloy, unique in its individual coloration.[4]

---

[4] Adam Walacinski, "Preface" to *Karol Szymanowski: Gesamtausgabe, vol. 9 (Werke für Violine und Klavier)*(Krakow, PWM, 1978), X.

With the creation and cultivation of this "peculiar stylistic alloy," Szymanowski's works from these productive years are acknowledged to be among his finest. In addition to the Nocturne and Tarantella, the *Mythes*, and First Violin Concerto, an assortment of works for various musical combinations were written. Notable among these is the *Love Songs of Hafiz* (1911), the first work to be written in the new style; the unusual, one-movement Third Symphony (1916), entitled "Song of the Night," based on the poetry of the thirteenth-century Persian mystic Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi, and scored for tenor, chorus, and orchestra; and two sets of piano pieces, the *Métopes* (1915) and *Masques* (1915-16), both of which were inspired by mythological themes. All of these works were conceived in the relative isolation of Timoshovka, where Szymanowski could indulge in what Samson calls his "interior landscape"--a "hedonistic inner world, by means of which he could distance the immediacy of life."[5] On the strength of this inner world, Szymanowski's musical imagination reached its zenith; unfortunately, it was short-lived, for the immediacy of life, in the form of the Bolshevik Revolution and its attendent horrors, intruded upon this "interior landscape" and led to a temporary break in his career. For two years, from 1918 to 1920, Szymanowski wrote no music. But with the unification of Poland in late 1919, the composer saw reason to come out of his forced retirement and began charting the path toward a new musical style.

---

[5] Samson, 80.

Nationalism (1920-1934)

The final phase of Szymanowski's career is markedly different from the "Impressionist" period. Returning to a newly unified Poland, he saw an opportunity to create a distinctly "Polish" musical style, one based on the music of the indigenous people. Like Bartók (1881-1945) and Stravinsky (1882-1971), both of whom served as his new models, Szymanowski attempted to fuse folkloristic elements within the frameworks of Western art music; in his case, the folk material came from the Tatra mountain people near Zakopane, a small resort town in the southern part of Poland, where Szymanowski spent most of the rest of his life.

The idea of creating a "national" style was apparently all-consuming, and there are accounts of Szymanowski being fascinated by the mountain people's music, transcribing their songs and pieces into his notebooks. In his exploration of Polish folk music, he left behind the hedonism of the "Impressionist" period; in general, the music from this final phase shows a strong tendency for simplicity of style and economy of means. More specifically, one can find in these late works a return to conventional tonality and harmony, clarity of form, and a "cooling-off" of expression, although the emphasis on melody continues to be a strong trait.

This new style aptly accommodated the folkloristic elements. According to Samson, the music of the Tatra highlanders

> is characterized by various kinds of polyphonic singing for high mens' and deep womens' voices, including distended parallelism, by the use of pedal points either of open fifths or jarring minor seconds and by a remarkable heterophony of two fiddles over a simple bass on a three-string instrument. The repertory of tunes is fairly modest and a great deal depends on the quality of the improvisations based on these tunes. There is a tendency for Lydian patterns and descending shapes to predominate.[6]

Szymanowski used these folkloristic elements in one of two ways: either incorporating actual folk melodies within a composition (e.g., in the song cycle *Slopiewnie,* 1921, and the ballet *Harnasie,* 1923-31); or by subtly infusing folkloristic idioms (e.g., melodic and rhythmic patterns, harmony) into the musical fabric of a traditional form. The latter approach was more pervasive in the late works.

The list of compositions from this period is just as varied as those from the "Impressionist" phase, if not as extensive. Four new major works were completed. The *Stabat Mater* was finished in 1926 and received its first performance in 1929. The ballet *Harnasie* was finished in 1931, although it was begun as early 1923. A long-promised piano concerto for Rubinstein took the form of the *Symphonie Concertante,* Op. 60, which was completed in 1932 (the work is also known as Szymanowski's Fourth Symphony). Finally, at Kochanski's behest, the composer produced a Second Violin Concerto in 1933. Smaller-scaled works include numerous songs, mostly lullabies, and--in true nationalistic spirit--two sets of mazurkas for piano solo (Op. 56 and 73, 1923 and 1933 respectively).

---

[6] Ibid., 167.

Szymanowski's compositional career ended in 1933. The financial hardships of his last four years precluded his writing any more music. How he might have developed had he not died relatively young (in his case, fifty-four) is, of course, open to speculation. But what he did achieve was a small body of well-crafted, varied, and distinguished compositions which merit closer scrutiny and frequent performances.

Violinistic Considerations

The most significant portion of Szymanowski's violin music was written in collaboration with Pavel Kochanski, possibly the greatest violinist to emerge from Poland around the turn of the century. The two first met in Warsaw in 1901, when Szymanowski was nineteen and Kochanski a mere boy of fourteen; the ensuing friendship that flourished resulted in a remarkable musical association that created what the composer called a "new mode of expression for the violin."

This "new mode" was part of the stylistic change that Szymanowski underwent during his "Impressionist" period. The early works for violin and piano--the Violin Sonata, Op. 9, and the Romance, Op. 23--are technically conservative for the violinist and influenced by late Romantic idioms, as were all of his other compositions from this period, as we have seen. In the Nocturne and Tarantella, Op. 28, the *Mythes*, Op. 30, and the First Violin Concerto, Op. 35, all composed after 1914, Szymanowski created a totally different style of writing for the violin, one that combined many progressive compositional

elements with the techniques already worked out in the virtuoso violin repertoire of the 19th century.

Having said this, the "new mode of expression" was therefore not entirely new. On the purely technical level, all of the devices used in these "Impressionist" works--double stops, harmonics, tremolandos, simultaneous left-hand pizzicato and arco, *glissandi*--were part of the virtuoso tradition stemming from Nicolo Paganini (1782-1840) up to and including violinists of Szymanowski's generation. In fact, it was Paganini who first utilised these techniques in his 24 Caprices, Op. 1 (1805), more than a century before Szymanowski created his "new mode." What is novel about Szymanowski's violin writing is how effectively and easily he derives 20th-century sonorities from these 19th-century technical devices. This is most evident in the realm of double-stops, where dissonant intervals are derived from consonant intervals simply by having the violinist place his or her fingers on a different string. For instance, a major third and a minor seventh are fingered exactly the same way, except that in the latter case the higher finger is place on the higher string and the lower finger on the lower string (the opposite configuration would produce a major third).

Furthermore, and more importantly, is how these technical devices are used. As Alistair Wightman points out,

> it is not so much the techniques themselves that are new as the way in which they are made the basis of a personal idiom. Far from being gilt on stale gingerbread, like so much 19th-century virtuosity,

> Szymanowski's requirements are essential to the musical argument in that his virtuoso devices have an inherent colouristic musical value and are not merely for ornamental exhibitionism.[7]

The Szymanowski-Kochanski collaboration was one of the most close-knit of associations between a composer and a performer, both on the personal and professional levels. Kochanski was, by all accounts, a man of considerable charm, sincerity, and warmth, and he had tremendous respect for Szymanowski's talent. The two men lived in close proximity to one another during the First World War, the violinist in Kiev and the composer at nearby Timoshovka. Kochanski was therefore available to personally advise Szymanowski on the composition of the Nocturne and Tarantella, the *Mythes*, and the First Violin Concerto. As well, the two often performed together during this time, usually programming the composer's earlier, in addition to most recent, works for violin and piano.

The extent of Kochanski's contribution to Szymanowski's style was marked in terms of instrumental considerations and musical priorities. The violinist's practical demonstrations must have opened the composer's eyes to the possibilities of the instrument, if we are to judge by enormous differences in technical demands between the early and "Impressionist" works. Kochanski also helped the composer solve detailed problems of technique and with the final editing of the violin parts (for which he provided fingerings and bowings). As a result, Szymanowski's violin music lies well under the hand; even in the

---

[7] Alistair Wightman, "Szymanowski, Bartók, and the Violin," *Musical Times* (Mar., 1981), 161.

most difficult passages, the writing is thoroughly idiomatic and conforms to the natural system of fingering for the instrument. Musically, too, Kochanski seemed to have inspired Szymanowski; the violinist's own playing emphasized lyricism above pyrotechnics, and the composer wrote for him music that is predominantly melodic in nature. Only in the Nocturne and Tarantella, Op. 28, does Szymanowski allow virtuoso display to take precedence.

The "Impressionistic" works must count as Szymanowski's most important contributions to the violin repertoire. They represent a novel utilisation of standard technical devices within the new musical dictates of the composer's style. Szymanowski, however, did not follow up with more violin music in the same vein. The later works for violin, with the possible exception of the three transcriptions of Paganini's Caprices for violin and piano (1918), eschew the "new mode of expression" in favor of lyricism and more traditional, conservative instrumental writing. In part, this was due to a shift in Szymanowski's musical priorities, which was moving away from Impressionistic tendencies towards a simpler style. As we turn our attention to the individual works, both the stylistic evolution of Szymanowski's art and his handling of violinistic idioms will become clearer.

CHAPTER TWO

LATE ROMANTIC BEGINNINGS: THE SONATA, OP. 9, AND ROMANCE, OP.23

As pointed out in the opening chapter, Szymanowski's early works were written under the influence of the late Romantic composers he so admired, especially Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Brahms. In his first works for violin and piano--the Violin Sonata, Op. 9, and the Romance, Op. 23--this influence can be felt in Szymanowski's handling of structure and harmony. At the same time, these two works introduced Szymanowski to the problems of writing for the violin, an instrument that was then unfamiliar to him. Overall, both compositions show a firm grasp of the compositional and instrumental issues at hand, although they do not as yet show the marked individuality of the later works.

Sonata in D minor, Op.9

Szymanowski wrote his Sonata in D minor for violin and piano during the years 1904 to 1905, while he was still a student at the Warsaw Conservatory.[1] Szymanowski's intention was to send the work to a competition in London, but this plan never materialized.[2] The dedication is to Bronislaw Gromadzski, a medical student and amateur violinist who was responsible for introducing

---

1 Kornel Michalowski, *Karol Szymanowski: Thematic Catalogue of Works and Bibliography* (Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1967), 44. It was not Szymanowski's first attempt at this genre, for an earlier Violin Sonata in E major was written in 1898, but has since been lost. See Jim Samson, *The Music of Szymanowski* (New York and London: Kahn and Averill, 1981), 211.

2 Michalowski, *Thematic Catalogue*, 44

many of Szymanowski's early works to the pianist Artur Rubinstein and, more significantly, Pavel Kochanski.[3] The work was first performed in April of 1909 by Kochanski and Rubinstein, and was subsequently published by Spólka Nakladowa, the Polish Composers' Press, in Warsaw in 1911.

In this work, it is clear from the onset that Szymanowski was influenced by the late Romantic tradition. His penchant for emulating other composers is in evidence here. In particular, the violin sonata of Franck and Brahms's Op. 100 (both composed in 1886) may have served as models for Szymanowski's own sonata. Yet at the same time, there is the stamp of an emerging individualism, which would flourish in the years to come.

The first movement, marked Allegro moderato, is in a clearly organized sonata form:

Exposition: measures 1 to 82.

Mm. 1-18	Presentation of motives *a,b,c,* and *d* (D minor).
Mm. 19-33	Transitional section leading to second theme. Motive *d* prominent and treated melodically.
Mm. 34-39	Motives *a* and *b* (slightly varied and transposed).
Mm. 39-43	Linking passage, "fantasia-like" in character.
Mm. 44-62	Presentation of second theme (F major), first by the violin, then taken over by the piano (m. 53).
Mm. 62-65	Motives *a* and *b* (transposed).

[3] Artur Rubinstein, *My Young Years* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1973), 116-117.

Mm. 66-82	Second theme. Insertion of the first "free" bar (*quasi Cadenza*) at m. 73.

Development: measures 82 to 114.

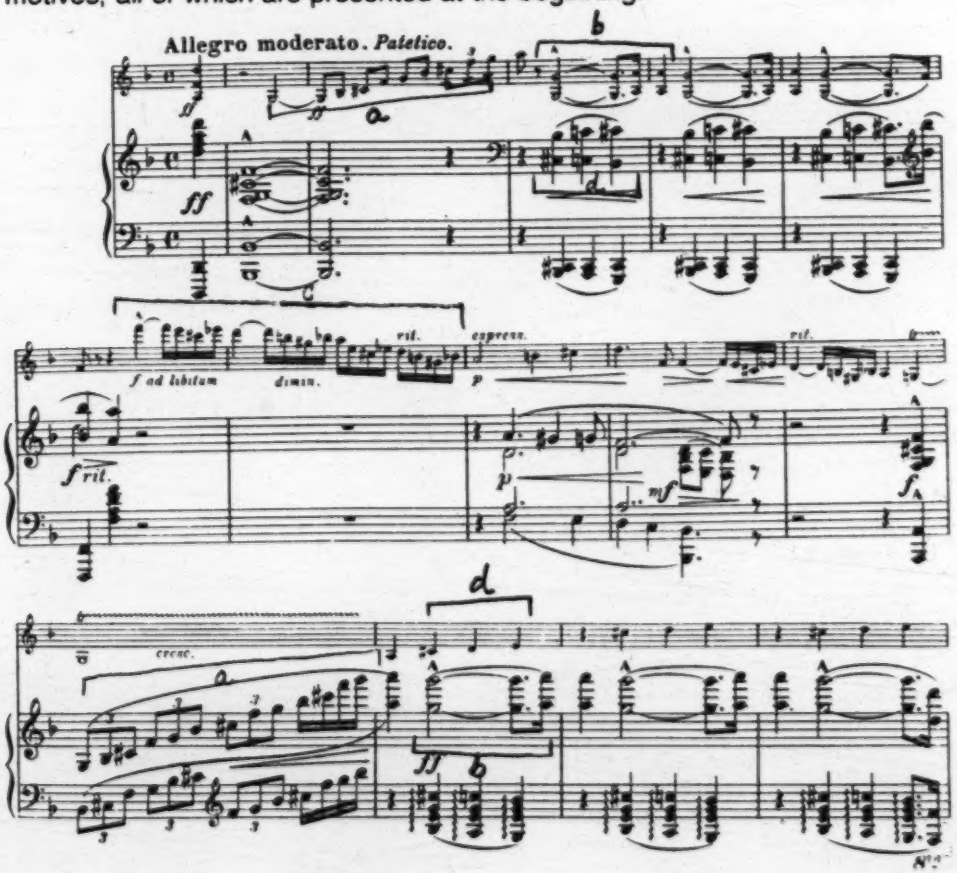
Mm. 83-86	Motive *c* played by the violin.
Mm. 87-89	Motive *c* played by the piano in octaves.
Mm. 90-99	Fragmentation of motive *c*.
Mm. 100-109	Second theme and motive *a* combined and transposed.
Mm. 110-114	Transitional passage leading to recapitulation. Variation of motive *b* played by the piano.

Recapitulation: measures 115 to 193.

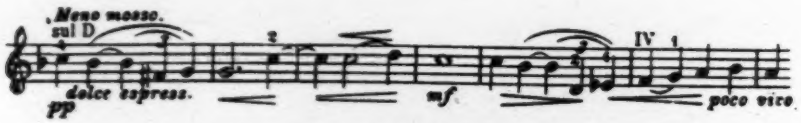
Mm. 115-126	Motives *a,b,c,* and *d* reappear. Truncated version of opening of exposition.
Mm. 127-148	Transitional passage leading to second theme.
Mm. 149-187	Second theme (D major).
Mm. 188-191	Postlude. Second "free" bar (*a piacere*) at m. 188. Motive *b* concludes the movement.

By late 19th-century standards, there is nothing novel about the movement in terms of structure, tonal plan, or harmony. The use of sonata form is obvious, with the various parts clearly delineated and well-balanced in length. Tonally, too, the movement is organized along a traditional paradigm. The exposition moves from the tonic (D minor) to the relative major, the

development modulates (but never fixes on any particular tonality), and the recapitulation eventually takes the movement to the tonic major, which is the key at the conclusion. The harmonic language used throughout the movement is chromatic and clearly in the *fin de siecle* vein.

The thematic material deserves comment and some comparison with that found in the Violin Sonata of Franck. The movement is dominated by four motives, all of which are presented at the beginning:

Ex. 1. Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro moderato, mm. 1-14

These four motives can best be described as "instrumental" in nature. By contrast, the second theme is lyrical:



Ex. 2. Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro moderato, mm. 43-53, violin part.

The construction and presentation of all of this thematic material is adept, but curiously lacking in coherence. In particular, motive *c* is too disparate from and does not seem to grow out of, its counterparts; it functions more as a "cadenza," which may have been the composer's intention, as he marks it *ad libitum* when it first appears in measures 6 and 7. Nor, it seems, is the material conducive to rigorous motivic treatment. This is apparent in the short development section, where Szymanowski relies mainly on transposition and repetition. One senses here that Szymanowski's compositional style may not have been entirely suited to sonata form, and it is interesting to note that the later violin music is cast in simpler structures which do not require the strictness of the sonata principle.[4]

If some of this thematic material smacks of a certain familiarity, then one should turn to Franck for comparisons. As Jim Samson has pointed out, "[The Sonata's] proximity to the famous sonata by Cesar Franck . . . is too marked to be fortuitous."[5] Motive *a* probably found its model in the second movement of

---

[4] It is also significant to note that very few of the larger-scaled works of Szymanowski's later periods (e.g., the Third Symphony, the Violin Concertos, and the Second String Quartet) employ sonata form.

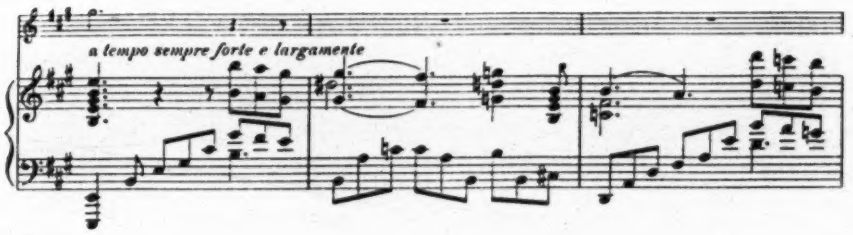
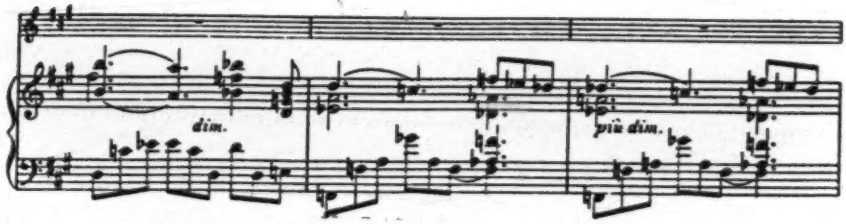
[5] Samson, *The Music of Szymanowski*, 48.

Franck's work:

Ex. 3. Franck, Sonata in A major, Allegro, mm. 96-98, violin part.

Motive *c* can be compared to the opening of the third movement, where the violin has a similar "cadenza":

Ex. 4. Franck, Sonata in A major, Recitativo-Fantasia, mm. 4-8, violin part.

Noteworthy here is that the "con fantasia" marking corresponds to Szymanowski's "ad libitum" indication (see Ex. 1). Even some of the piano writing bears a strong resemblance to passages from Franck's Sonata:

Ex. 5(a). Franck, Sonata in A major, Allegretto ben moderato, mm. 31-36.

Ex. 5(b). Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro moderato, mm. 54-56.

While mimicry is apparent, there is nonetheless an indelible stamp of individuality in the Sonata's opening movement. The numerous indications of tempo changes may be construed as a generally successful attempt at blending rhapsodic elements within the sonata structure. They give the form some flexibility and interest, though at times, the music's overall flow is impeded. These rhapsodic touches slightly anticipate the use of freer structures such as those encountered in Szymanowski's Impressionist period.

Rhapsody is certainly a key quality in the second movement, marked Andantino tranquillo e dolce, and in ternary form:

A (Andantino tranquillo e dolce): measures 1 - 48 (A major)

Mm. 1-14 Piano introduction, presentation of main theme.

Mm. 15-16 Cadenza for the violin.

Mm. 17-24 Main theme played by the violin.

Mm. 24-30 Main theme presented by the piano, with variation provided by the violin.

Mm. 31-48 Variation of main theme.

B (Scherzando, piu moto): mm. 49-68 (A minor)

Mm. 49-54 Small "A" section; theme in pizzicato. Section is repeated.

Mm. 55-60 Small "B" section. Lyrical theme serves as contrast to small "A" sections.

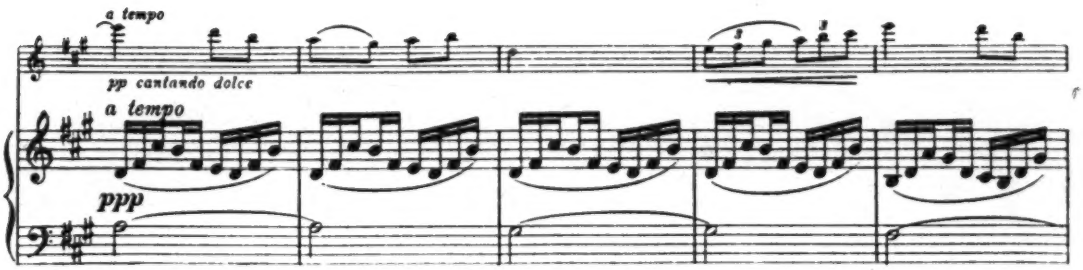
Mm. 61-66 Small "A" section.

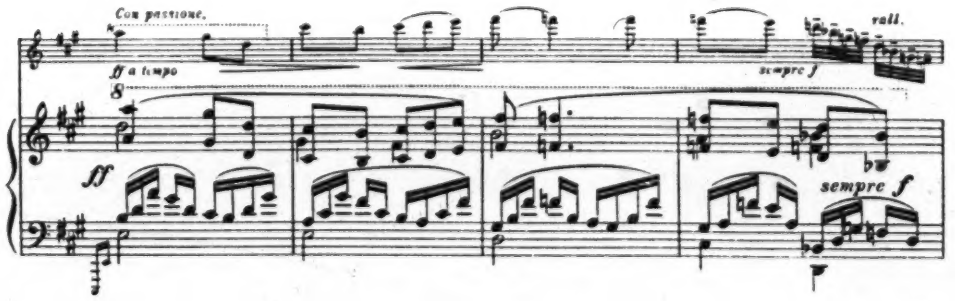
Mm. 67-68 Cadenza played by violin. Transposition of earlier cadenza (mm.15-16).

A (Tempo I): mm. 69-109 (A major)

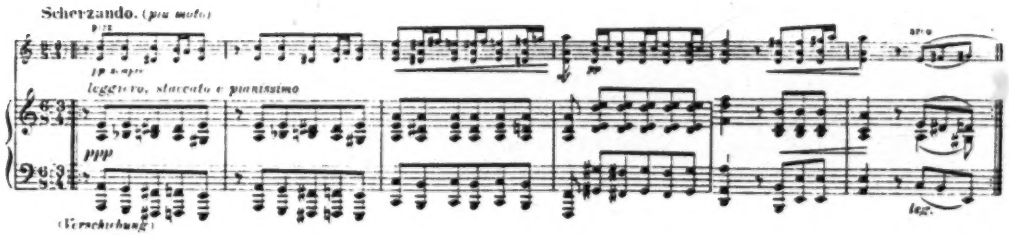
Mm. 69-97 Main theme varied throughout this section. Violin part more active from mm. 88-96, culminating at m. 97 (*a piacere, molto ritardando*).

Mm. 98-109 Postlude. Reminiscent of opening introduction. Cadenza played by the violin at m. 103 nearly identical to first cadenza.

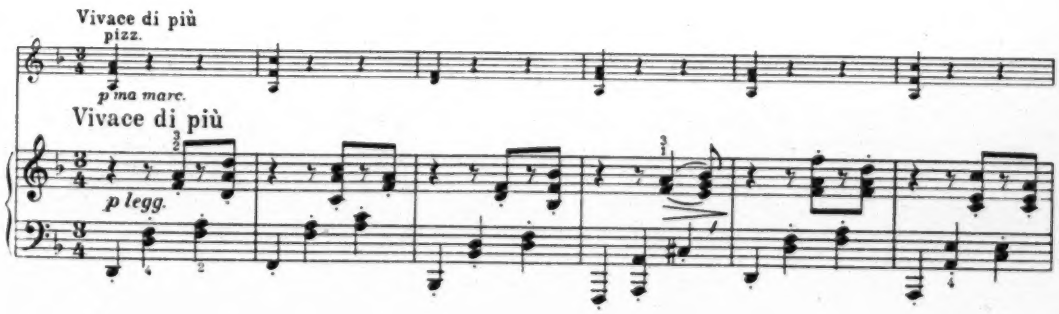
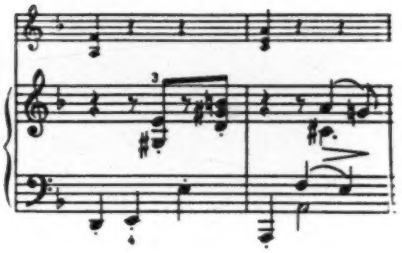
This movement makes use of only a few themes, but they are all compelling. The A sections feature a beautiful cantilena melody played by the violin, accompanied by lilting and slightly impetuous pianistic figures:

Ex. 6. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Andante tranquillo e dolce, mm. 17-21.

The reprise has the violin varying this simple melody with thirty-second notes, ultimately culminating at measure 93 in an unabashedly Romantic spirit:

Ex. 7. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Andante tranquillo e dolce, mm. 93-96

The B section offers considerable contrast. Marked *scherzando* and moving at a faster tempo, this part of the movement is light-hearted in character:



Ex. 8. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Andante tranquillo e dolce, mm. 49-54.

There is a certain similarity between this passage and the latter part of the second movement from Brahms's Second Violin Sonata, Op. 100, at least in character and the use of *pizzicato:*

Ex. 9. Brahms, Sonata No. 2, Andante tranquillo, mm. 94-101.

It is possible that Brahms's work may have provided the model for this part of the second movement.

The opening violin cadenza may have been modelled after the beginning of Max Bruch's (1838-1920) First Violin Concerto (1868). The similarity is so striking that one wonders a little whether it was by design or by coincidence:

Ex. 10. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Andante tranquillo e dolce, mm. 15-16, violin part.

Ex. 11. Bruch, Violin Concerto No. 1, Vorspiel, m. 6, violin part.

The inclusion of passages such as Ex. 10, as well as other freer and rhapsodic moments, echoes those found in the first movement. Here, though, the overall flow of the music is not felt to be hindered. This is partly due to the simplicity of the structure, which allows for more flexibility in the handling of the thematic material.

A stricter approach to thematic material is evinced in the finale, marked Allegro molto, quasi presto, and once again in sonata form:

Exposition: measures 1 to 129

Mm. 1-13	Introduction played by piano. Violin enters at m. 11.
Mm. 14-48	Presentation of first theme (D minor)
Mm. 48-72	Transitional section. First theme treated contrapuntally.
Mm. 73-129	Presentation of second theme (F major). Fragment of first theme used as counterpoint starting at m. 85.

Development: measures 130 to 189

Mm. 130-134	Announcement of the beginning of Development.
Mm. 135-138	Second theme (altered) played by piano.
Mm. 139-168	Fragments of first and second themes combined and played by piano. Violin accompanies with string-crossing figures.
Mm. 169-189	Transitional section leading to Recapitulation. First theme treated chromatically from mm. 175-180

(piano part). Reappearance of introductory material at m. 181 (piano part). Piano sustains pedal point on A until m. 187.

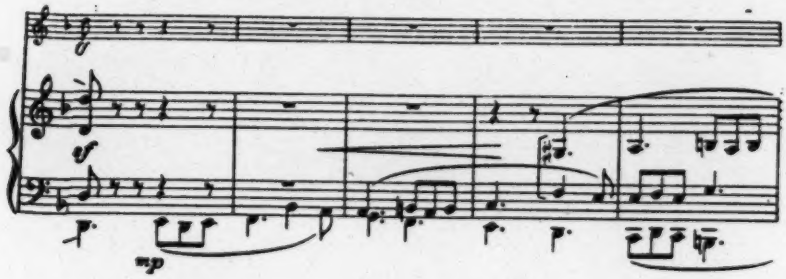
Recapitulation: measures 190 to 289

Mm. 190-207	Reappearance of first theme.
Mm. 208-219	Short transition leading to second theme.
Mm. 220-227	Second theme (D major) played by violin. Piano accompanies with first theme in D major.
Mm. 226-251	Second theme played by piano. Violin accompanies with first theme.
Mm. 252-289	Coda, marked *ancora piu vivace*. Cyclic use of motive *a* from first movement at mm. 271 to 273. Conclusion (marked *presto*) in D major.

As with the first movement, the sonata form structure is clearly delineated, as is the tonal scheme. But here the thematic material is more concise and coherent. The first theme is built upon a two-measure unit that predominates throughout:

Ex. 12. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro molto, quasi Presto, mm. 15 to 16.

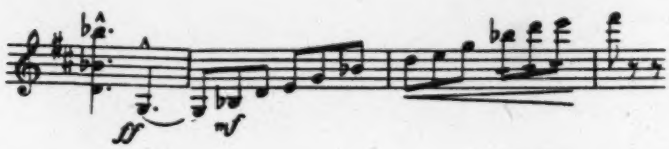
This unit is later transformed and treated contrapuntally:

Ex. 13. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro molto, quasi Presto, mm. 54 to 55.

Ex. 14. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro molto, quasi Presto, mm. 48 to 52.

The second theme contrasts nicely with this material. It is reminiscent of the first movement's second theme, hence giving the whole work a sense of coherence:

Ex. 15. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro molto, quasi Presto, mm. 73 to 80.

Further coherence is achieved by the restatement of the opening flourish of the first movement at the finale's conclusion--yet another indication that Szymanowski was under the influence of the Romantics:

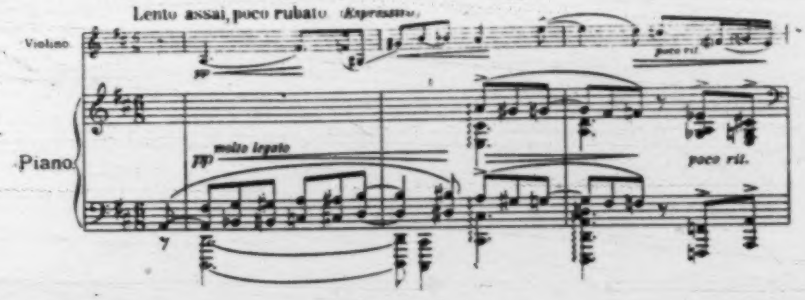
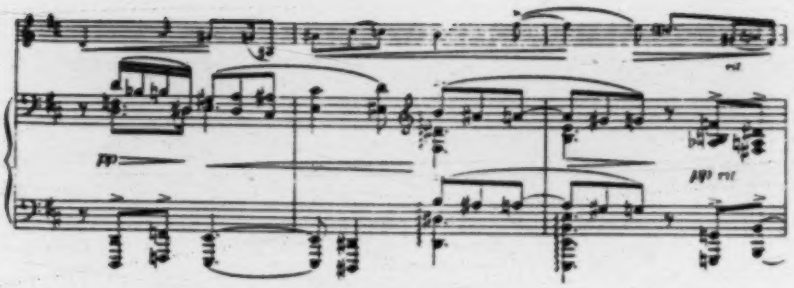


Ex. 16. Szymanowski, Sonata, Op. 9, Allegro molto, quasi Presto, mm. 271 to 274.

As a whole, Szymanowski's Violin Sonata is a meritorious work, deserving of more exposure than it currently receives. While not as distinguished as many other works in the genre, its appeal lies in its clear, concise form and the writing for the violin. In the case of the latter, one could offer praise even at this early juncture of the composer's career. Though the demands placed on the violinist are only modest here--a few fast scales in thirty-second notes, some leaps into the upper tessitura, and some passages in octaves constitute the most difficult parts of the work--it is thoroughly idiomatic and gratifying to play. Whether Szymanowski had any help in the formation of the violin part is not known. Even though he may have managed on his own, he understood that the essential nature of the instrument is melodic, and in his later music--technically more demanding and much more imaginative--he would continue to emphasize this quality.

Romance in D major, Op. 23

Evidence of continued interest in the use of the violin for his melodic ideals can be found in Szymanowski's second work for the instrument, the Romance in D major, Op. 23. According to the composer, the Romance was written "for the sake of a rest" during the composition of the Second Symphony.[6] Although finished in two days in October of 1910, the Romance was not premiered until 8 April 1913. The violinist was Józef Oziminski and Szymanowski accompanied at the piano.

The Romance is perhaps Szymanowski's most rapturous creation for the violin. The melodic line is often passionate in nature, abetted by the frequent use of the upper registers, especially on the G and E strings. It is also a strongly chromatic work (more so than the Sonata), and suggests the influence of composers such as Wagner and Richard Strauss, whose works were being studied by Szymanowski at this time. The chromaticism is immediately apparent in the opening bars, and is displayed in both the violin and piano parts:

6 Letter to a friend, quoted in B. M. Maciejewski, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Music* (London: Poets' and Painters' Press, 1967), 37.

Ex. 17. Szymanowski, Romance, Op. 23, mm. 1 to 6.

Despite the chromaticism, the work has a straightforward tonal design, placed within a simple (*ABAB*) structure. The A sections and B2 are in the tonic key, while B1 moves to the dominant (A major). The following diagram illustrates these points:

A1 (measures 1 to 14), D major.

B1 (measures 15 to 29), A major.

A2 (measures 30 to 48), D major. Phrase extension from mm. 34 to 37.

B2 (measures 49 to 62), D major.

Coda (measures 63 to 78), various temporary tonalities leading to D major.

A criticism of the work might be directed at the thick and solid nature of the piano part. The density of the piano writing is not entirely fitting given the simplicity and lyrical nature of the violin line; a thinner accompaniment may

have been more appropriate. On a more positive note, the writing for the violin is once again thoroughly idiomatic and, at times, more adventurous than in the Sonata. In addition to the exploration of the instrument's upper register, the Romance features a bolder use of double-stops:

Ex. 18. Szymanowski, Romance, Op. 23, mm. 26 to 29, violin part.

Both the use of high registers and double-stops would become more prominent in later works.

With the completion of the Sonata and the Romance, Szymanowski attained a solid, if not yet novel, approach to composing for the violin. In his next four works-- his most important contributions to the violin repertoire--he would work in close consultation with Pavel Kochanski and develop the "new mode of expression" which would open up to him a wide range of interesting instrumental idioms.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MASTERPIECES OF THE IMPRESSIONIST PERIOD (I): NOCTURNE AND TARANTELLA, OP. 28, AND *MITY*, OP. 30

The works written between the years 1914 to 1919 represent the apex of Szymanowski's career. His former foundation in German Romanticism gave way to French Impressionism as represented by Debussy and Ravel. This is immediately apparent given not only the new textures and sonorities of Szymanowski's music from this period, but also the titles of the works. Most of the piano music has descriptive titles (e.g., the suites *Métopes* and *Masques*). Even abstract forms such as the symphony bear little structural resemblance to their traditional counterparts (e.g., the Third Symphony is written in one continuous movement and is given the title "The Song of the Night").

The violin music from Szymanowski's Impressionist period is no exception to this new trend. It consists of four major works, three of which have gained deserved recognition: the Nocturne and Tarantella, Op. 28; the *Mity* (Mythes), Op. 30; and the First Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 35. The fourth work, a set of transcriptions based on three caprices by Nicolo Paganini, pays homage to this Italian genius who created the violinistic idioms on which Szymanowski based his "new mode of expression." This chapter will focus on the first two compositions in some detail, and in the process I will point out significant advances over the early works with regards to musical style and the writing for the violin.

Nocturne and Tarantella, Op. 28

The exact date of composition of these pieces is uncertain. According to Lisa Lantz's research, both works were written in 1915.[1] Szymanowski's biographer, B.M. Maciejewski, places the pieces a year later, in 1916.[2] The thematic catalogue prepared by Kornel Michalowski agrees with Lantz, giving the date of the pieces as 1915.[3] They were published together by Universal Edition in 1921. The first performance was by Kochanski and Szymanowski at a charity concert in Kiev in 1919.

Not much is known about the composition of the Nocturne, written at Zarudzie, an estate not far from Szymanowski's home in Ukraine. The genesis of the Tarantella is quite humorous. According to Maciejewski, the Tarantella was conceived in a drunken stupor:

> Whilst in Zarudzie, the trusting host [Josef] Jaroszynski had to leave his distinguished guests Szymanowski, Kochanski, and [August] Iwanski [the son of a well-to-do landowner and a good friend of Szymanowski]. In searching for something to do, Iwanski came across a few bottles of old cognac. In the tipsy mood which ensued, Szymanowski jotted down on a bit of paper his merry and carefree "Tarantella," Op. 28, for violin and piano. Almost needless to say, the work was dedicated to Iwanski--the "Cognac finder"![4]

---

[1] Lisa Lantz, *The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski* (DMA Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1994), 36.

[2] B. M. Maciejewski, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Music* (London: Poets' and Painters' Press, 1967), 58

[3] Kornel Michalowski, *Karol Szymanowski: Thematic Catalogue of Works and Bibliography* (Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muczyczne, 1967),106

[4] Maciejewski, 57 - 58.

Both the Nocturne and the Tarantella are in ternary form. The Nocturne is dominated by a lengthy "B" section (marked *Allegretto scherzando*), distinctly Spanish in style, sandwiched between two "A" sections (*Lento assai*) which evoke a mysterious, nocturnal mood. The Tarantella offers less contrast; it is propulsive and virtuosic from start to finish, although the "B" section is more lyrical in nature. The outlines below offer more detailed synopses of both pieces:

NOCTURNE

A: measures 1 to 16 (*Lento assai*)

M. 1	Piano introduction.
Mm. 2-7	Theme 1 in perfect fifths, played by violin.
Mm. 8-16	Theme 2 presented by violin and exchanged with the piano.

B: measures 17 to 61(*Allegretto scherzando*)

Mm. 17-18	"Spanish" accompaniment figure introduced by piano.
Mm. 19-21	"Spanish" theme introduced by piano; "Spanish" accompaniment figure in *strum pizzicato* played by violin.
Mm. 22-34	"Spanish" theme taken over by violin. Numerous tempo changes in this section.
Mm. 35-36	Theme 2 reappears briefly.
Mm. 37-60	Resumption of "Spanish" theme and accompaniment.

A: measures 61 to 71(*Tempo I*)

Mm. 61-65 Theme 2 played by violin.

Mm. 66-67 Theme 1.

Mm. 68-69 Theme 2.

Mm. 70-71 Theme 1 played in double harmonics.

TARANTELLA

A: measures 1 to 188

Mm. 1-16	Introduction. Presentation of "Tarantella" motive.
M. 17-124	Main ("Tarantella") theme. From here to m. 124, the violin is showcased; "Tarantella" motive used prominently.
Mm. 125-132	Second theme presented by violin.
Mm. 133-140	Variation of second theme.
Mm. 141-148	Interjection of "Tarantella" rhythm.
Mm. 149-188	Second theme and its variation in various transpositions.

B: measures 189 to 259 (*Meno mosso*)

Mm. 189-204	"Lyrical" theme, derived from "Tarantella" theme.
Mm. 205-228	"Lyrical" theme in various transpositions.
Mm. 229-246	"Lyrical" theme in original key played by piano.
Mm. 247-258	Transition to recapitulation of "A" section

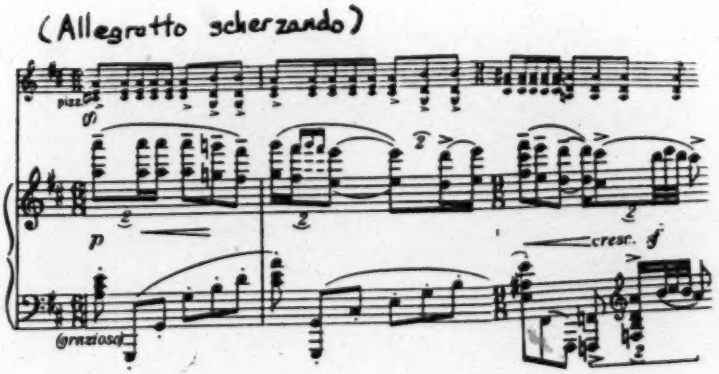
A : measures 259 to 417 (*Tempo I*)

Mm. 259-334	Literal repetition of mm. 17 to 92.
Mm. 335-350	Second theme in harmonics.
Mm. 351-362	Transitional passage using "Tarantella" motive.
Mm. 363-379	Second theme played by piano; violin takes over second theme at m. 371.
Mm. 380-386	Variation of second theme played by violin, accompanied by "Lyrical" theme in piano.
Mm. 387-402	Transitional passage.
Mm. 403-410	Main ("Tarantella") theme played by violin, accompanied by second theme in piano.
Mm. 411-417	Glissando flourish, followed by firm cadence in E major.

Of the two pieces, the Nocturne offers more variety in terms of thematic material. The opening passage of parallel fifths played by the violin, which makes up the first theme of the "A" section, is striking both in its originality and immediacy in which it sets up a "night" mood:

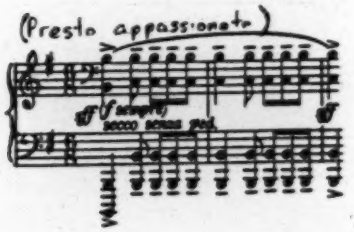
Ex. 19. Szymanowski, Nocturne, Op. 28, No. 1, mm. 2-4, violin part.

The use of open fifths here is original. Traditionally, for string instruments this interval is found as the base of a four-note chord; its function is more harmonic than melodic. It would seem that Szymanowski was the first to use this interval in a melodic sequence. No examples of similar passages can be found in the virtuoso literature, perhaps because such a procedure would defy traditional tonality. But here a distinctively twentieth-century sonority is achieved, one which would be used by other composers.[5]

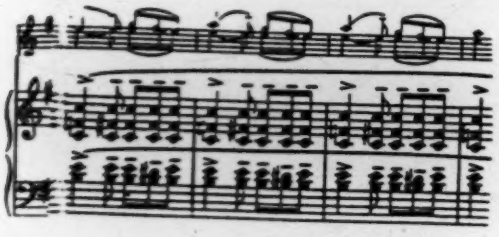
In the "B" section of the Nocturne, Spanish influences are discernible, most notably by the use of duplet and triplet rhythms which suggests a Habanera. The "Spanish" theme accompanied by the violin in pizzicato, perhaps an imitation of the guitar, suggests a more festive mood, in complete contrast to the "A" section:

Ex. 20. Szymanowski, Nocturne, Op. 28, No. 1, mm. 19-21.

5 Among them was Béla Bartók. See conclusion, p. 119.

The Nocturne also shows some striking stylistic changes from Szymanowski's earlier violin music. Most notable is the overall harmonic scheme. The main tonal areas move from B minor (mm. 1 to 8), to B-flat minor (mm. 9 to 16), then to A major (mm. 17 to 44), before resolving back to B minor (mm. 45 to 71). The semitonal motion that governs the first three areas sets up a framework which allows for the highly chromatic harmonies to take place, while the resolution in B minor brings the piece back within traditional tonality. All of this indicates an expansion of Szymanowski's harmonic language beyond the normal parameters of Romantic harmony, pointing towards the harmonic procedures of slightly later works.

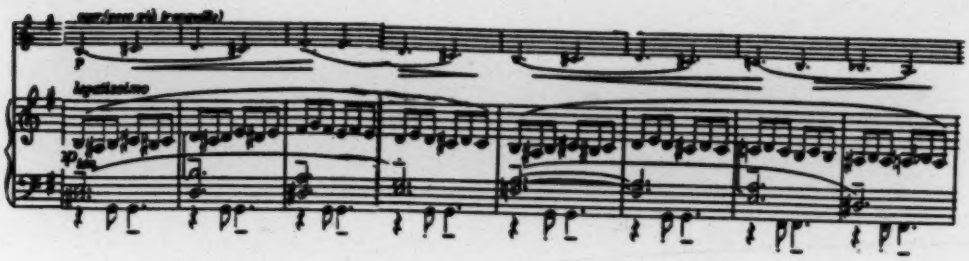
Thematic, harmonic, and mood contrast do not figure prominently in the Tarantella. For the most part, the piece is dominated by a propulsive, recurring rhythmic motive first introduced by the piano:

Ex. 21. Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 1-2, piano part.

Variations of this motive are either similar to this example (i.e., essentially rhythmic) or else somewhat more melodic:

Ex. 22(a). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 33-36.

Ex. 22(b). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 21-23.

The first theme is succinct, consisting of only four bars; it is not repeated often and serves as a structural marker announcing the "A" sections:

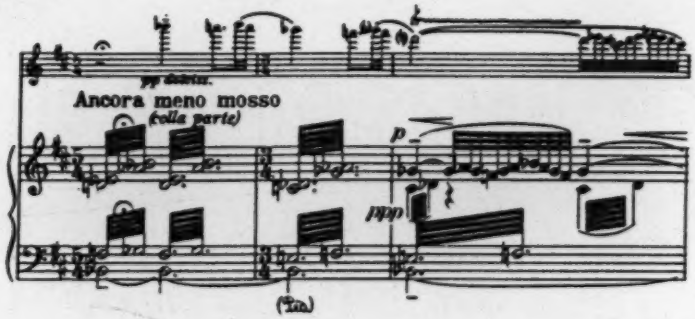
Ex. 23. Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 17-20, violin part.

A second, contrasting theme is introduced at measure 125, accompanied by running eighth notes which keep the momentum going:

Ex. 24. Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 125-132.

Only when the piece reaches the "B" section (measure 189) does the momentum slacken a little; the melody here is a variation of the first theme:

Ex. 25. Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 189-192, violin part.

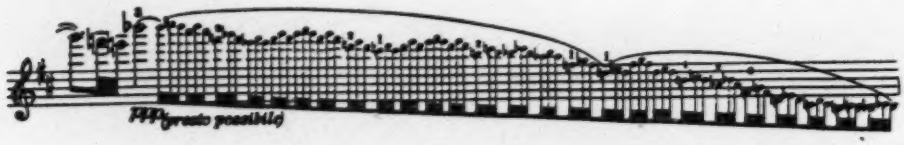
Harmonically, the Tarantella is less adventurous than the Nocturne. Although chromaticism is abundantly present, as well as harmonies based on fourths and fifths, it never shifts the tonal focus away from E minor. One reason for this is the fact that long stretches of the music are in this key. A prime example can be found at the very opening (mm. 1 to 20). In the first sixteen measures, the incessant emphasis on B-natural suggests an imminent cadence and sets the listener up for a resolution. This comes at measure 16, and it is a strong cadence onto an E minor chord. A similar passage takes place a little later on, from measures 59 to 81, serving to further reinforce the tonality.

It is not difficult to see in these two works that new paths were being explored by Szymanowski. Stylistically, the composer still treats the piano part as an accompaniment to the violin, but here the pianist's role is larger and more important than in the earlier works. Indications of greater emphasis on the piano part are readily apparent. For one thing, the level of difficulty of these pieces is far more advanced than either the piano parts of the Sonata and Romance. As well, the piano is allocated a greater share of the thematic material, thus raising its stature to the same level as the violin. Even at those moments where the piano is only serving to accompany the violin, the style of writing adds considerably to the overall mood of the work; for instance:

Ex. 26. Szymanowski, Nocturne, Op. 28, No. 1, mm. 8-10.

Incidentally, the use of *tremolando,* an atmospheric element here, would become a favorite device in the *Mythes.*

Violinistically, the Nocturne and Tarantella represent the most technically advanced works written by Szymanowski up to this point. The Nocturne emphasizes lyrical playing in the high register, thus testing the performer's

sense of intonation. As well, a technically challenging cadenza leads into the "Spanish" middle section:



Ex. 27. Szymanowski, Nocturne, Op. 28, No. 1, m. 16, violin part.

Also challenging are the double-harmonics in parallel fifths at the conclusion of the Nocturne, a variation of the work's opening:

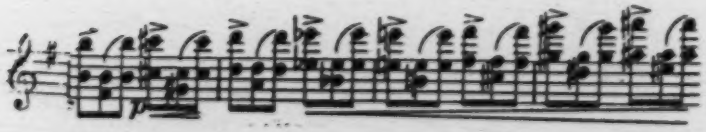
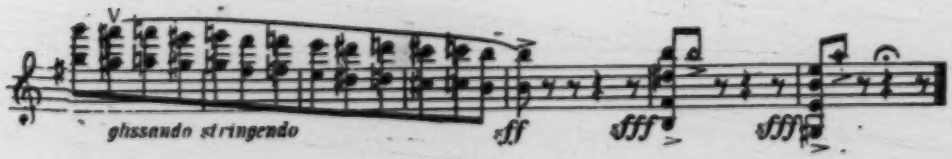
Ex. 28. Szymanowski, Nocturne, Op. 28, No. 1, mm. 70-71, violin part.

The Tarantella makes even more severe technical demands, with hardly a moment's respite. The more difficult technical passages are as follows:

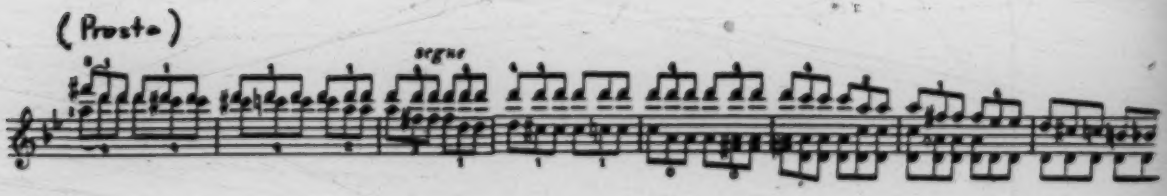
Ex. 29(a). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 9-12, violin part.

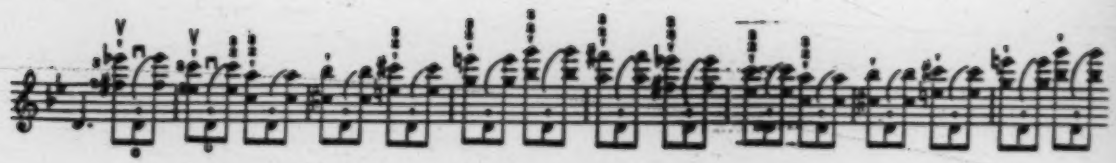
Ex. 29(b). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 69-72, violin part.

Ex. 29(c). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 93-99, violin part.

Ex. 29(d). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 380-383, violin part.

Ex. 29(e). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 395-399, violin part.

Ex. 29(f). Szymanowski, Tarantella, Op. 28, No. 2, mm. 411-417, violin part.

Example 29(a) contains dissonant double-stops that are idiomatically conceived. Example 29(b) and (d) are clearly related to one another, and feature the use of an upper auxiliary to the lower note of regular moving octaves, an original idea, and perhaps the first time such a passage appears in the violin literature. Example 29(c) tests the performer's dexterity; the upper notes must be played entirely on the D string in order for the G pedal to be sustained. Example 29(e) features an unusual and advanced chordal combination, the perfect fourth and the octave; again, this is idiomatic in conception for it lies naturally under the hand. Finally, example 29(f), which concludes the Tarantella, is positively Paganinian in influence, for it was the Italian violin genius who first introduced octaves in *glissando*--most notably in the Twenty-third Caprice from his Op. 1 (1805). Some of the other passages also may have been inspired by another virtuoso piece by an earlier Polish composer, the violinist Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880). In Wieniawski's Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op. 16 (1856), passages can be found which may have served as models for examples 29(a) and (e) respectively:



Ex. 30(a). Wieniawski, Scherzo-Tarnatelle, Op. 16, mm. 405-412, violin part.

Ex. 30(b). Wieniawski, Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op. 16, mm. 397-404.

The Nocturne and Tarantella thus represent a major turning point in Szymanowski's violin music. Though not as imaginative as the works which followed--they are, in essence, two showpieces for the violinist, although they contain more substance than most other works in the genre--the handling of the musical texture and the violinistic idioms shows considerable advancement over the Sonata and Romance. Violinists have generally embraced the Nocturne and Tarantella enthusiastically, and it has been a featured part of the repertoire of many great players, including Yehudi Menuhin, Nathan Milstein, Henryk Szeryng, Arthur Grumiaux, and, more recently, Kyung Wha Chung. Szymanowski's exploration of virtuoso devices would continue in the *Mythes*, the First Violin Concerto, and the three transcriptions of Paganini's Caprices, all of which were written in the next three years. They represent the high point of the composer's output for the violin.

Mity (Mythes), Op. 30

The *Mythes* were composed between March and June of 1915, and were dedicated to Sophie Kochanska, wife of Pavel Kochanski. It was her husband who premiered all three works in 1916, at a charity concert in Uman, Ukraine, with Szymanowski at the piano.[6] The *Mythes* were subsequently taken up by other notable violinists, including Bronislaw Huberman, Joseph Szigeti, Yehudi Menuhin, David Oistrakh, Nathan Milstein, Jascha Heifetz, and Henryk Szeryng, to name only a few. They remain today Szymanowski's most popular and frequently performed chamber work.

Given the programmatic titles of the individual pieces in this set--"La Fontaine d'Arethuse," "Narcisse," and "Dryads et Pan"--one is tempted to read a "storyline" in the music. Szymanowski was questioned about the extent to which he attempted to musically depict the mythology that inspired the work. The query was posed by the American violinist Robert Imandt, who asked what the "spiritual clue" of the *Mythes* was:

> With the "spiritual clue" I understand the sense of the legend, which you had in mind in composing the *Myths* [sic]. You will surely say "I had in mind Arethusa and Narcissus" and then I will ask: Did you consider one and the other as still pictures, radiating colors and feelings from a particular point: the figure of Narcissus emerging from the legend--or on the other hand, did you want the performer to present to the listener life's proceedings in a live anecdote of Narcissus or Arethusa.

---

[6] The first piece, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," however, was performed as early as 1915, shortly after its completion.

Szymanowski's reply to Imandt was as follows:

> From the two interpretations of the "program" which you gave, the more accurate one is the first. It was not to be a drama, unfolding in a series of scenes, from which each has an anecdotal significance--it is rather a musical expression capturing the beauty of the *Myth*.[7]

From this perspective, then, one should view the *Mythes* more in terms of absolute rather than program music. Thus, Lisa Lantz's readings of these works (in particular, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse") in her thesis, with their dramatic interpretations of various passages, go against the composer's stated intention.[8]

The first piece, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse" ("The Fountain of Arethusa"), is one of Szymanowski's most famous compositions, and is often performed or recorded separately. The source of the title comes from Ovid, who tells the story of Arethusa, a young huntress and worshipper of Athena. After being chased by the river god Alpheus, Arethusa is transformed by Athena into a spring of water in order to escape his unwanted amorous overtures.

"La Fontaine d'Arethuse" is cast in a simple ternary form (as are the other two *Mythes*); its structural outline is as follows:

---

[7] Quoted in Teresa Chylinska, *Szymanowski: His life and Works* (Los Angeles: Friends of Polish Music, 1993), 94-95.

[8] Lantz, 48-73.

A: measures 1 to 28

Mm. 1 - 8	Piano introduction ("Water" accompaniment); bitonality used (A minor and E-flat minor).
Mm. 9 - 28	First theme introduced by violin. Temporary resolution in E-flat major at m. 21.

B: measures 29 to 73

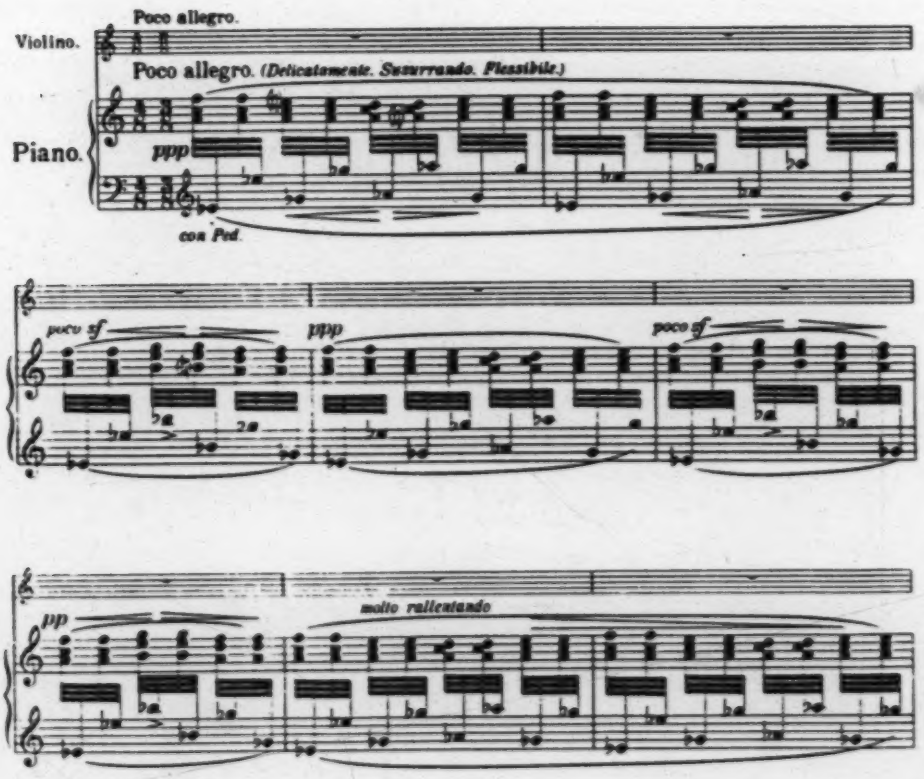
Mm. 30 - 36	Second theme introduced by violin, combined with first theme.
Mm. 42 - 46	Short transition.
Mm. 47 - 56	Second theme fragmented and in augmentation.
Mm. 57 - 73	Longer transition leading climax (mm. 71 to 73). Variation of second theme (mm. 63 to 68).

A: measures 74 to 117

Mm. 74 - 81	"Water" accompaniment.
Mm. 87 - 103	First theme; temporary resolution in E-flat major at m. 99.
M. 104	Reappearance of second theme as cadenza.
Mm. 105 - 117	Coda. "Cadence" on E-flat.

From the onset, one can sense that a new musical style is in effect. The opening of "La Fontaine d'Arethuse" is imaginative in its evocation of the sound of water and a succinct example of how much freer Szymanowski's harmonic language had become. The "rippling" effect is created, interestingly enough, by

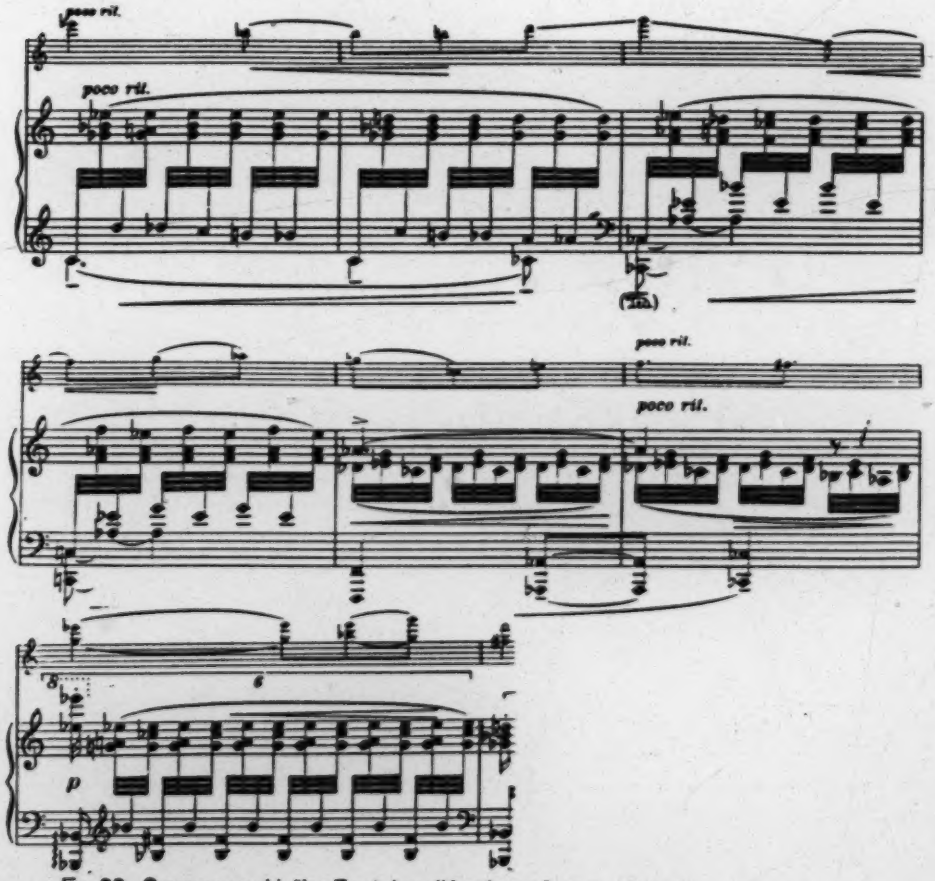
relatively static pianistic motions (repeated chords in the right hand, broken octaves in the left):



Ex. 31. Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 1 to 8.

More noteworthy is the use of bitonality, a device cultivated by Ravel, Debussy, and Stravinsky, and from here on a hallmark of Szymanowski's "Impressionist" period. Two keys are presented: A minor and E-flat minor; the

tritone separating the two tonics sets up what Samson calls "referential or 'invariant' pitch areas to provide a framework which will contain the impressionistic harmonies, but without really shaping or directing those harmonies in a traditional tonal sense."[9] One can sense throughout "La Fontaine d'Arethuse" implications of E-flat or A as a sort of tonic, but the "resolutions" to these notes are never strong nor are they approached via conventional means. As an example:



Ex. 32. Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 15 to 21.

[9] Samson, 90.

Measure 21 highlights E-flat in both the top line of the piano part and the violin part; however, it is supported by a weak bass, B-flat, which suggests second inversion. Furthermore, the harmonic motion leading to this "resolution" does not anticipate a move to E-flat. Similar passages can be found in the remainder of the piece. Thus, traditional harmonic progressions do not apply to "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," and if one were to extend Samson's observation to other works from this period (including the remaining *Mythes*), then one will see the extent to which Szymanowski abandoned traditional tonality in favor of a freer harmonic vocabulary.

In terms of the thematic material, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse" demonstrates the composer's continued interest in rapturous, lyrical writing for the violin, especially in the instrument's high register. The first theme is a case in point:

Ex. 33. Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 9 to 12, violin part.

This opening theme dominates the rather short A section; in the B section, it becomes the goal of the second theme, which is chromatic in nature and will assume prominence:

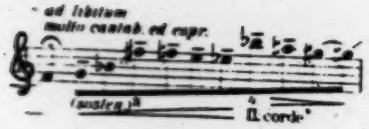
Ex. 34. Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 29 to 36, violin part.

Fragments of this chromatic second theme are varied later on: at measures 47 to 50 (Ex. 35(a)), where it is presented in augmentation and repeated in double-harmonics; and from measures 63 to 66 (Ex. 35(b)), where it is decorated and not entirely obvious.

Ex. 35(a). Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 47 to 50, violin part.

Ex. 35(b). Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," mm. 63 to 66, violin part.

The second theme makes a brief, final appearance in the coda, where it takes on a nostalgic quality:



Ex. 36. Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," m. 104, violin part.

The writing for the violin in this piece shows considerable imagination. Part of the appeal of "La Fontaine d'Arethuse" lies in its effective and coloristic use of violinistic idioms. Unlike the Nocturne and Tarantella, "La Fontaine" is not an overtly virtuoso work; however, it makes good use of several virtuoso devices not seen in the earlier works. For example, the use of *tremolando* is given an atmospheric treatment near the end of the piece and may be regarded as a violinistic evocation of "water," hence complementing the piano's opening:

Ex. 37. Szymanowski, "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," m. 109, violin part.

Other noteworthy passages include the use of double harmonics (mm. 49 to 50) and the climactic chromatic *glissando* at measures 71 to 72. The emphasis on lyricism--Szymanowski's basic violinistic tenet--is ever present as usual, and will continue to characterize the rest of his violin music.

The second piece takes its inspiration from the well-known story of Narcissus. The outline of this piece is similar to that of "La Fontaine d'Arethuse":

A: measures 1 to 48

Mm. 1 - 3	Piano accompaniment, presentation of multi-layered dissonance.
Mm. 4 - 22	First theme presented by violin.
Mm. 23 - 49	"Obsession" motive prominent (*Poco piu animato*); second theme presented m. 26.

B: measures 49 to 96

Mm. 49 - 52	Third theme (*Meno mosso*). B major confirmed as tonality.
Mm. 53 - 61	*Poco animato*. Alternating sequences of 2nds and 7ths exchanged in *stretto* between piano and violin.
Mm. 62 - 73	First theme developed.
Mm. 74 - 75	"Obsession" motive developed.
Mm. 76 - 82	First theme.
Mm. 83 - 92	Third theme.
Mm. 93 - 96	Second theme.

A: measures 97 to 148

Mm. 97 - 122	First theme. Climax at m. 117 (triple *forte*).
Mm. 123 - 137	Second theme, accompanied by "obsession" motive.

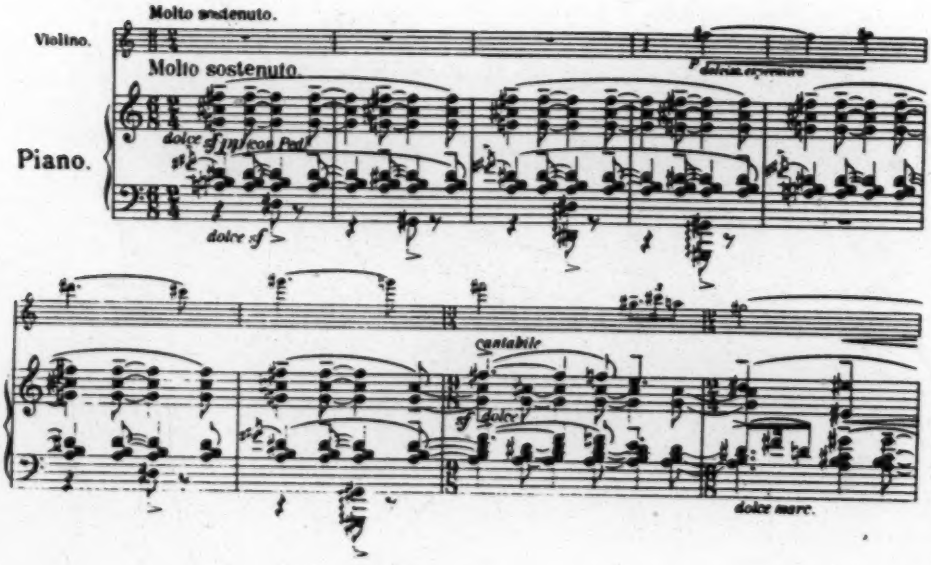
Mm. 138 - 148 Codetta. Third, second, and first themes combined into single melodic line (summation). Close in B major.

As with "La Fontaine d'Arethuse," "Narcisse" makes use of a small number of themes, all lyrical in nature. The first theme is by far the most prominent:

Ex. 38. Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 4 to 9, violin part.

Within this opening theme is a motive (marked "x") which becomes more conspicuous later on. I call this the "obsession" motive, for it may have programmatic significance. The repetition of this motive from measures 23 to 49, and at the corresponding passage in the reprise of the A section (measures 123 to 137), may be seen as a musical representation of Narcissus's self love. Although there is no confirmation for this, this seems a plausible interpretation. The "obsession" motive accompanies the second theme, which moves in the opposite melodic direction from the first theme:

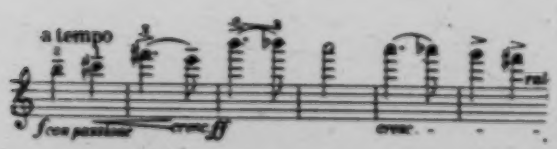
Ex. 39. Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 26 to 31, violin part.

Another similarity to "La Fontaine d'Arethuse" can be seen in the opening of "Narcisse," where a melody is presented over an accompaniment. In this case, however, the piano part is less evocative than in the previous piece. Here, the chords serve to create a multi-layered harmonic backdrop against which the first theme is played:

Ex. 40. Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 1 to 9.

Samson breaks down these harmonic "layers" into three groups: the tritone and perfect fourth (G - C# - F#); the dominant-quality trichord (A - B - D#); and the bass motions from D# and G#. The sonority created by this opening accompaniment is that of a "single resonating dissonance rather than an effect of bitonality".[10] Furthermore, there is considerable unity between melody and harmony here, for the notes of the first theme are all derived from the opening chord.

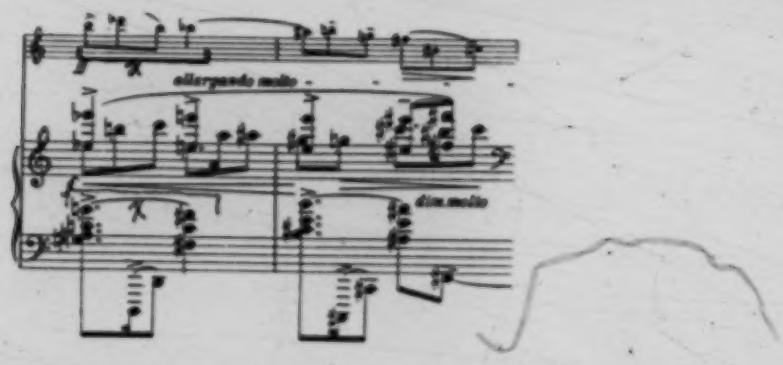
Dissonance permeates much of the rest of the A section, although a strong cadential motion at measures 22 and 23 makes it clear that B-natural is the tonal center of the piece. This is further confirmed in the B section, where a B-natural pedal is sustained over eleven bars (measures 49 to 59). The melodic material of this passage suggests B major as the key, although a flattened seventh (A-natural) is present.

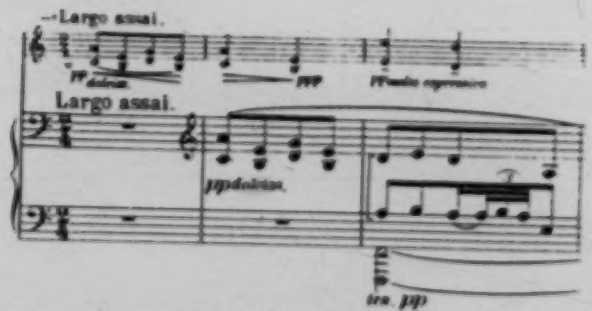
The B section also serves as a mini-development, working out the first and third themes, as well as the "obsession" motive. The first theme is extended by two measures and is slightly altered rhythmically:



Ex. 41. Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 68 to 73, violin part.

[10] Samson, 91.

The "obsession" motive, while not prominently featured, is presented simultaneously in both its original form and in a slightly varied rhythmic format:

Ex. 42. Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 74 to 75.

The third theme, which announced the beginning of the B section, is given a slightly canonic treatment:

Ex. 43. Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 83 to 85.

Violinistically, "Narcisse" is the least technically demanding of the three pieces. For the most part, lyricism prevails; the melodic lines are simple to play and do not explore the upper register too often. The only real difficulties are to be found in the B section, where the third theme is presented in double-stops:

Ex. 44. Szymanowski, "Narcisse," mm. 49 to 52, violin part.

The idiomatic quality of this passage is obvious to violinists. The dissonant intervals that color this part of the piece are all derived from consonant intervals; thus, minor sevenths are fingered the same way as major thirds, major seconds are related to octaves, and perfect fourths are derived from major sixths. The execution of this passage is therefore comfortable, since these intervals spring directly from the nature of the instrument.

Technical difficulties and programmatic suggestion abound in the final piece of the triptych, entitled "Dryads et Pan". Once again, ternary form is used, this time preceded by an introduction of considerable innovation:

Introduction: measures 1 to 10

Mm. 1 - 10 Violin solo; notable use of quarter tone below D-natural. Piano entry at measure 4.

A: measures 11 to 54

Mm. 12 - 16 First theme ("Dryad" theme) introduced by piano, accompanied by tremolando and arpeggios in the violin part.

Mm. 17 - 23 First theme played by violin; piano plays "Dryad" accompaniment.

Mm. 24 - 41	"Free" section I: "Dryad" accompaniment and fragments of first theme featured.
Mm. 42 - 54	Transitional material; glissando trills in major seconds in violin part.

B: measures 55 to 119

Mm. 55 - 58	"La flûte de Pan"
Mm. 59 - 68	Second theme.
Mm. 69	"Pan pipe" interruption.
Mm. 70 - 72	"Dryad" accompaniment.
Mm. 73 - 80	Third theme.
Mm. 81 - 84	Second theme.
Mm. 85 - 90	Variant of first theme.
Mm. 91 - 94	Third theme.
Mm. 95 - 112	"Free" section II: fragments of first and second themes incorporated.
Mm. 113 - 119	Second and third themes combined.

A: measures 120 to 142

Mm. 120 - 127	First theme, with occasional interjections of second and third themes (e.g. mm. 122 to 123, 126 to 127).
Mm. 128 - 142	Transitional material, with ocassional use of second and third themes.
Mm. 143 - 157	Coda.

"Dryads et Pan" contains the strongest programmatic elements of the set. One of these, the imitation of Pan's pipes, is written in the score by Szymanowski himself; there may perhaps be others, though they are not labelled. The composer himself, however, in his answer to Robert Imandt's question, went on to describe "Dryads et Pan" in some detail:

> In the *Dryads*, one can imagine the material as anecdotal, in a sense. Therefore, a murmuring forest on a hot summer night, thousands of mysterious voices intermingled in the darkness, merrymaking and dancing Dryads. Suddenly the sound of Pan's flute. Calm and unrest followed by a suggestive, languorous melody. Pan appears. The amorous glances of the Dryads and the indescribable fright in their eyes- Pan leaps backwards--the dance is resumed--then everything calms down in the freshness and calmness of the rising sun. In essence, an expression of complete reverie of a restless summer night.[11]

The murmurs of the forest where the Dryads live are probably evoked by the quarter-tone undulations at the beginning:

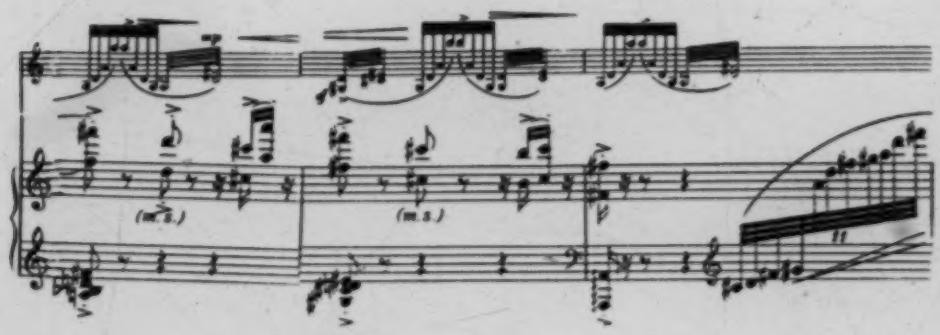
Ex. 45. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 1 to 4, violin part.

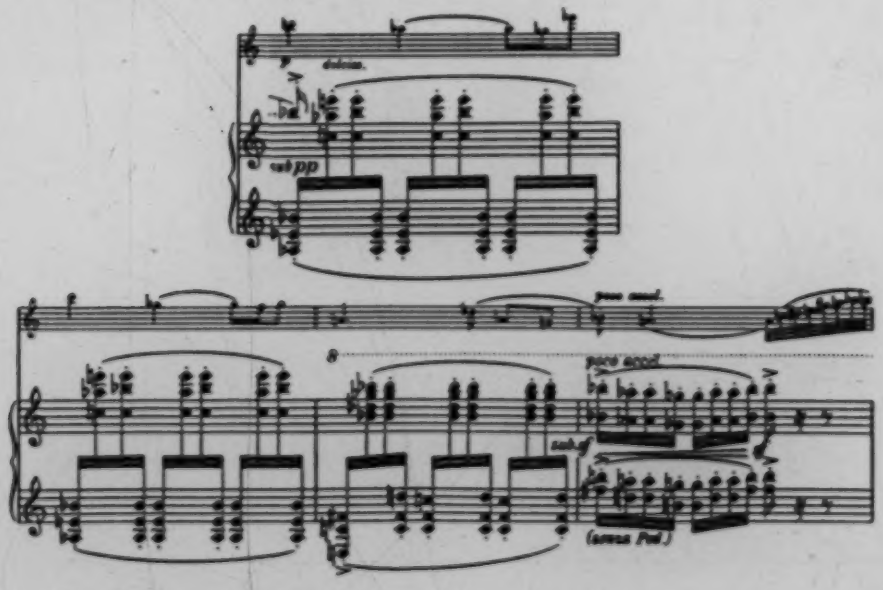
This innovative opening, which represents the first time in music history that quarter tones on the violin are used and notated[12], leads to a merry first theme

---

[11] Quoted in Chylinska, 95.

[12] The upside-down flat symbol is explained in the score by the composer with the following remark: "Abaissez le *ré* d'un quart de ton." (Lower the D by a quarter tone.)

(the "Dryad" theme) which may be taken to depict the carefree nature of these woodland nymphs:

Ex. 46. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 12 to 14.

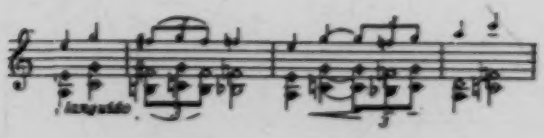
When the violin enters with this theme, it is accompanied by jaunty pianistic figures which I call the "Dryad" accompaniment:

Ex. 47. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 17 to 20.

From here, the music moves toward its climax with an ever-increasing sense of frenzy. The culmination at measure 54 marks the end of the A section.

At the beginning of the B section, the use of natural harmonics to evoke the sound of Pan's pipes is effective and also serves to alleviate the dissonance of the previous section:

Ex. 48. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 55 to 57, violin part.

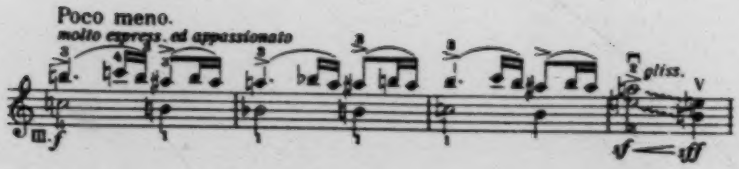
The second theme which follows is also played in harmonics by the violin; its tenderness aptly suggests Pan's ability to play "melodies as sweet as the nightingale's song"[13]:



Ex. 49. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 61 to 64, violin part.

The third theme is bittersweet, perhaps a representation of Pan's disappointment at being rejected by a Dryad because of his ugliness:

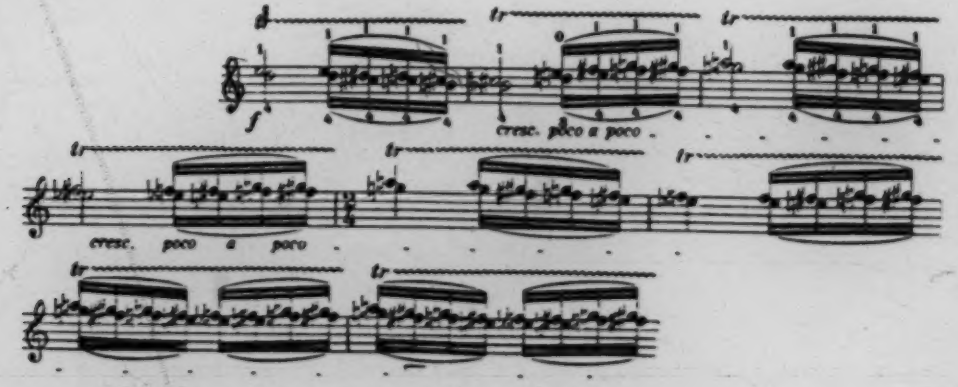
---

[13] Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1944), 44

Ex. 50. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 73 to 76, violin part.

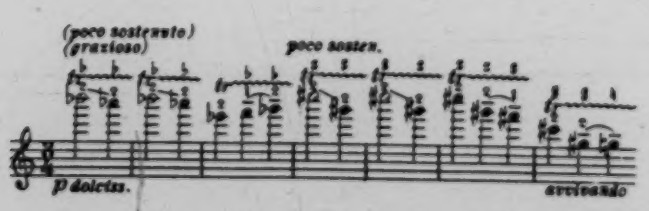
The use of major sevenths here would become a characteristic trait of Szymanowski's violin writing. All of these themes make brief reappearances in the truncated reprise of the A section.

The harmonic backdrop against which Szymanowski sets his thematic material is his most dissonant and elaborate. The tonal focus is D-natural and this is presented at the onset of the piece; later articulations of this note or its triadic formations (at measures 11, 57, and 123) are used to mark the piece's ternary structure. Szymanowski generates his harmonies through the imposition of parallel chords within a major second around this tonal center. This is readily apparent at the beginning:

Ex. 51. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 4 to 7.

As with "Narcisse," this opening produces the effect of ringing dissonances rather than bitonality. Much of "Dryads et Pan" is colored by these dissonances, transposed to different pitch levels; even the violin part is given extended passages that are harsher than usual:

Ex. 52. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 42 to 49, violin part.

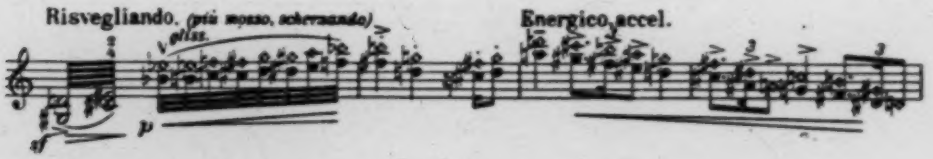
This is only one of the numerous difficulties encountered by the violinist in this piece. "Dryads et Pan" contains the most technically advanced violinistic writing of the *Mythes*. Much of it incorporates trills and tremolandos, as in the above example; other instances include the following:



Ex. 53(a). Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 27 to 33, violin part.

Ex. 53(b). Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 50 to 54, violin part.

Harmonics are also featured prominently. In addition to the evocation of Pan's pipes and the second theme (Ex. 49), extensive use of artificial harmonics can be found:



Ex. 54. Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 103 to 107, violin part.

Finally, throughout the piece Szymanowski inserts several virtuoso runs which demand the utmost in dexterity and control:

Ex. 55(a). Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," mm. 36 to 38, violin part.

Ex. 55(b). Szymanowski, "Dryads et Pan," m. 102, violin part.

With the composition of the *Mythes*, Szymanowski reached his full maturity as a composer and successfully created a "new mode of expression for the violin." The musical style of this work--a unique blend of Romanticism and Impressionism--would characterize Szymanowski's music for several more years. The writing for the violin, which utilizes virtuoso idioms within this new compositional context, would be carried forward and applied in his next two works for the instrument.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MASTERPIECES OF THE IMPRESSIONIST PERIOD (II): VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 1 AND THREE PAGANINI CAPRICES

> I must say that I am very happy with the [Violin concerto]--again there are various new notes--while at the same time there is a bit of a return to the old. The whole thing [is] terribly fantastic and unexpected.[1]

Thus Szymanowski wrote about the First Violin Concerto to his friend Stephan Spiess, shortly after the work's completion. Indeed, among the composer's *oeuvre* for the violin, this concerto stands out as the most original in design. As well, in the context of the development of the violin concerto as a genre, Szymanowski's First merits a significant place; its combination of Impressionistic and Romantic sonorities stamp it as one of the most unusual in the instrumental repertoire.

The entire work was sketched in the space of twelve days during the summer of 1916; the full score was completed in October of the same year. As with the *Mythes*, Szymanowski worked in close consultation with Pavel Kochanski, to whom the concerto is dedicated. The closeness of the artistic association between the two men can be readily seen: Kochanski not only edited the violin part, but he also provided a cadenza which is organically bound to the concerto.

The work, together with Szymanowski's Third Symphony, was originally

---

[1] Quoted in Teresa Chylinska, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Works* (Los Angeles: Friends of Polish Music, 1993), 115.

scheduled to be premiered during the 1916-1917 season in St. Petersburg, with Kochanski as the soloist. However, due to the political unrest in Russia at the time, the performance was postponed indefinitely. Not until November 1922 was the concerto presented to the public. The soloist was Josef Oziminski, who played the premiere in Warsaw; Kochanski later performed it in the United States with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski. The concerto met with critical success and was soon taken up by numerous concert violinists around the world.

Like most of Szymanowski's music from this period, the First Violin Concerto has an extra-musical association. The poem "Noc majowa" ("May Night") by Tadeusz Micinski, a writer who was a member of "Young Poland in Literature" and for whom Szymanowski had much admiration, apparently served as the inspiration for the work. How deeply the music and the poem are linked cannot be ascertained, and it has been pointed out that such a connection is perhaps not very useful to an understanding of the concerto.[2] Nevertheless, as Samson puts it, "much insight into its musical world can be gained from the programme."[3] A few quotations from the opening of the poem are provided here:

> Asses in crowns settle majestically on the grass--
> fireflies are kissing the wild rose--
> and Death shimmers on the pond
> and plays a frivolous song.
> Ephemerids
> fly into dance--

---

[2] Adam Walacinski, "Preface" to *Karol Szymanowski: Gesamtausgabe, vol. 4(Violinkonzerte).* (Krakow: PWM, 1978), viii.

[3] Jim Samson, *The Music of Szymanowski* (New York and London: Kahn and Averill, 1981), 114.

oh, flowers of the lakes, Nereids!
Pan plays his pipes in the oak grove.
Ephemerids
fly into dance,
fly into dance--
plaited in amorous embrace
eternally young and holy--
stabbed with a lethal dart,
golden crucians and roach.
and patient kingfishers
gaze with their eyes of steel--
and on the trees the hammering of
the little blacksmiths,
amid the sorb, red croaked-beaks
and kestrels with eyes like tinder--
merrily whistling and chatting...[4]

It is certainly possible to relate various parts of the concerto with Micinski's poem. The evocative opening orchestral tutti is an example. Its shimmering sonorities, produced by a combination of string tremolando, harmonics, and coloristic figures played by the woodwinds, harps, piano, and celeste, perhaps suggest the fantasy world as sketched in the first lines of "May Night." From this extraordinary beginning comes a musical structure that is, to say the least, original in concept. Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto makes few concessions to tradition in terms of form. The entire work seems improvisatory in nature; it is in one continuous movement, but closer examination reveals that the work is organized in seven sections, including a solo cadenza for the violin:

[4] Quoted in Lisa Lantz, *The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski: A Review of the Repertoire and Stylistic Features*. (Ohio State University: DMA Thesis, 1994), 75 - 76.

FIRST SECTION (mm. 1 to 145)

Mm. 1 - 19	Orchestral introduction. "Fanfare" and "whole-tone" motifs presented. Tonality uncertain.
Mm. 19 - 32	Violin entrance. Presentation of a six-note idea that is immediately transformed. Orchestra interjects with "whole-tone" motif.
Mm. 32 - 44	Orchestral interlude (*subito piu mosso a tempo*). Oboe solo (mm. 32 - 35), followed by transformation of "whole-tone" motif by orchestra.
Mm. 45 - 48	Six-note idea picked up by orchestra, presented in augmentation.
Mm. 48 - 70	First rhapsodic violin solo, accompanied by six-note idea (transformed) in orchestra.
Mm. 71 - 133	*Vivace assai.* Virtuoso section based primarily on "whole-tone" motif. Adumbration of later virtuoso sections. "Fanfare" motif also prominent (mm. 89 - 91, 100 - 105).
Mm. 134 - 145	Climax I, played by orchestra.

SECOND SECTION (mm. 146 to 250)

Mm. 146 - 159	Orchestral interlude (*ancora poco meno*), reminiscent of opening. Occasional interjections of "whole-tone" motifs.

Mm. 160 - 199	Violin solo. Presentation of theme A (mm. 163 - 164), followed by four transpositions. Theme B presented (m. 192). Theme A exchanged between violin and orchestra (mm. 196 - 199)
Mm. 200 - 211	Second rhapsodic violin solo (*Lento assai, improvvisando.*
Mm. 212 - 224	Theme A.
Mm. 225 - 237	Third rhapsodic violin solo (*Poco meno*).
Mm. 238 - 250	Orchestral interlude. Continuation of rhapsodic feeling (mm. 238 - 241) leads to Climax II (mm. 242 - 250), which features themes A and B in dissonant harmonies.

THIRD SECTION (mm. 251 to 341)

Mm. 251 - 259	Theme B presented by violin in augmentation.
Mm. 260 - 330	Virtuoso section. "Scherzando" theme presented by violin (mm. 272 - 283). First variant of "scherzando" theme played by orchestra and taken up by violin (mm. 284 to 291). Second variant of "scherzando" theme played by violin from mm. 306 to 309. Original "scherzando" theme reappears (mm. 322 to 330).
Mm. 331- 341	Orchestral interlude leading to Climax III.

FOURTH SECTION (mm. 342 to 427)

Mm. 342 - 363	Fourth rhapsodic violin solo (*Poco meno. Allegretto*).
Mm. 364 - 389	Third variant of "scherzando" theme.
Mm. 382 - 389	Theme B, in augmentation, played by violin.
Mm. 390 - 401	Theme A, in augmentation, played by violin.
Mm. 402 - 409	Theme B, in augmentation, played by violin.
Mm. 410 - 427	Orchestral interlude leading to Climax IV. Short transition (mm. 420 to 427) leading Fifth Section.

FIFTH SECTION (mm. 428 to 562)

Mm. 428 - 444	Adumbration of theme C.
Mm. 445 - 454	Theme C.
Mm. 455 - 459	Theme D played in harmonics by violin, accompanied by figures derived from theme C.
Mm. 460 - 461	Theme C in harmonics.
Mm. 462 - 467	Theme D played by violin and orchestra.
Mm. 468 - 469	Theme C.
Mm. 470 - 473	Theme D.
Mm. 474 - 486	Theme C exchanged between violin and orchestra.
Mm. 487 - 496	Rhythmic variants of theme C.

Mm. 497 - 518	Virtuoso section based on second variant of "scherzando" theme. Tonality on A-natural established (mm. 497 to 503).
Mm. 519 - 526	Second variant of "scherzando" theme presented by the violin.
Mm. 527 - 552	"Scherzando" theme and variant.
Mm. 555 - 562	Orchestral interlude leading to cadenza.

CADENZA (by P. Kochanski, mm. 563 to 592)

-- incorporates theme B (mm. 566 to 567), first variant of "scherzando" theme (mm. 578 to 580, 585 to 588), and material from first rhapsodic section (m. 576) with original material that is improvisatory in nature.

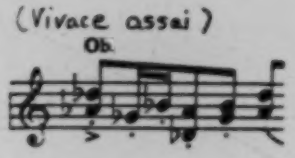
ORCHESTRAL CLIMAX (mm. 593 to 647)

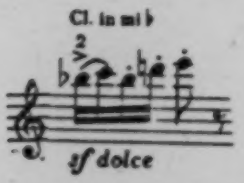
Mm. 589 - 596	Transitional passage linking cadenza with orchestral climax.
Mm. 597 - 604	Trombone solo, accompanied by "fanfare" motif (bassoons).
Mm. 605 - 608	Horn takes over material from trombone solo.
Mm. 609 - 616	Theme B.
Mm. 617 - 628	Theme A in augmentation, accompanied by "fanfare" motif.
Mm. 629 - 638	Variant of theme A.
Mm. 639 - 647	Confirmation of tonality on A-natural. Theme A in original form.

Coda (mm. 648 to 667)

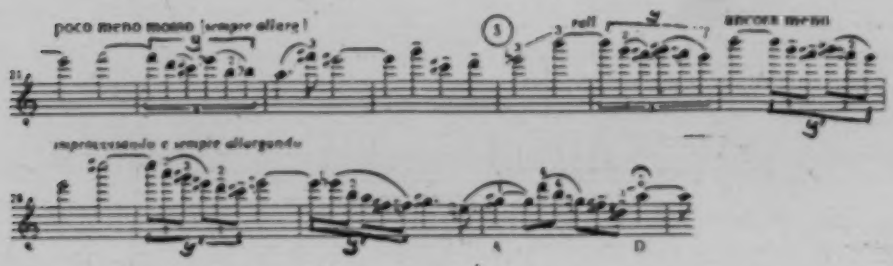
Mm. 648 - 650	Reference to opening "whole-tone" motif.
Mm. 651 - 661	Themes A and D played by violin.
Mm. 662 - 667	Closing gesture. Violin fades away on harmonics. Basses close the work on a soft A-natural (*pppp*) in pizzicato.

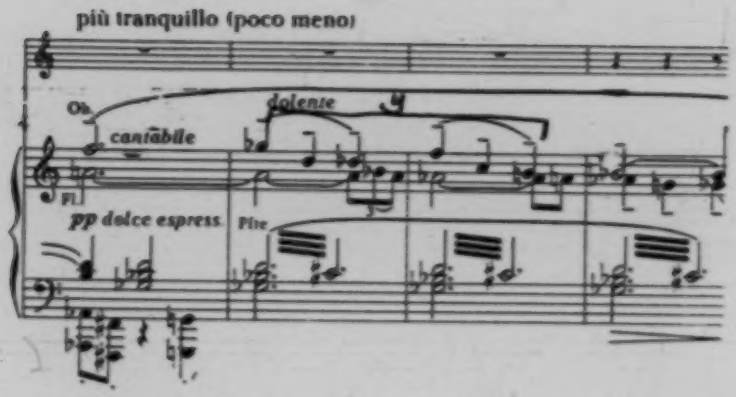
These divisions, while not definitive, do follow a general pattern: each begins quietly, usually with the violin, and ends climatically with the full orchestra.[5] Accepting these divisions, one can view the first section (mm. 1 to 145) as an area where Szymanowski establishes certain musical motifs and the relationship between soloist and orchestra. Two ideas are featured in the opening which will recur at various times: a spiky, "fanfare" motif (Ex. 56a), and a "whole-tone" motif (Ex. 56b) which gives the piece a tinge of Orientalism.



Ex. 56 (a). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No.1, Op. 35, m. 3, oboe parts

Ex. 56(b). Szymanowski Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, m. 5, clarinet III part (concert pitch)

[5] See Samson, *The Music of Symanowski*, 118 - 119, for an alternate structural reading of this concerto.

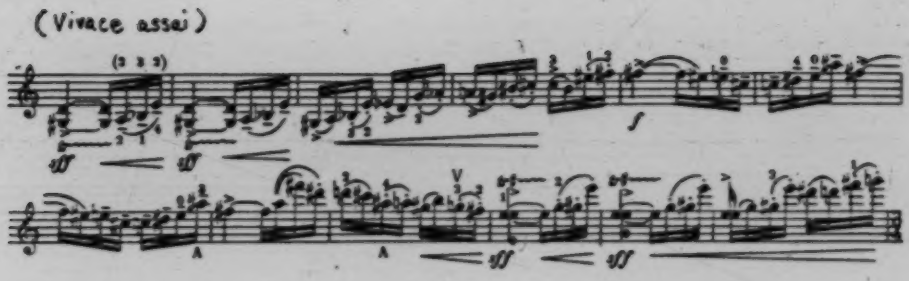
When the violin enters at measure 19, it does so almost imperceptibly, as if emerging from the orchestral fabric. This approach to introducing the solo instrument, unique in itself, continues throughout the work until the cadenza. The first solo features a six-note idea (marked "y") which is immediately transposed, then transformed, but does not reappear again in later sections of the concerto:

Ex. 57. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 21-32, violin part,

This pattern of presenting, then transposing and transforming, thematic material is another salient feature of the work. Furthermore, the material presented by the soloist is always taken up by the orchestra; the six-note idea recurs at measures 45 to 48, where it has undergone further transformation:

Ex. 58. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 45-48, piano reduction.

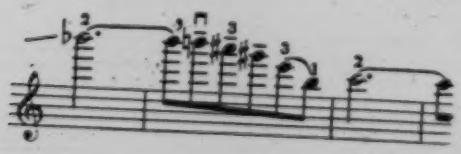
In later sections, the kinship between violin and orchestra grows closer, in that the latter delays less in picking up what the soloist presents.

The first section also introduces two contrasting types of solo passages that characterize the concerto. The first type is the rhapsodic violin solo, which is marked by "spun-out" runs in sixteenth notes that have an improvisatory feel about them. The first such passage occurs in measures 48 to 70, from which I extract an excerpt:

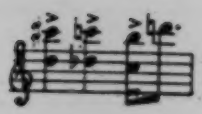
Ex. 59. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 55 to 57, violin part.

The second type is the virtuoso solo, which is fast and, as the label clearly suggests, showy in nature:

Ex. 60. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 73 to 84, violin part.

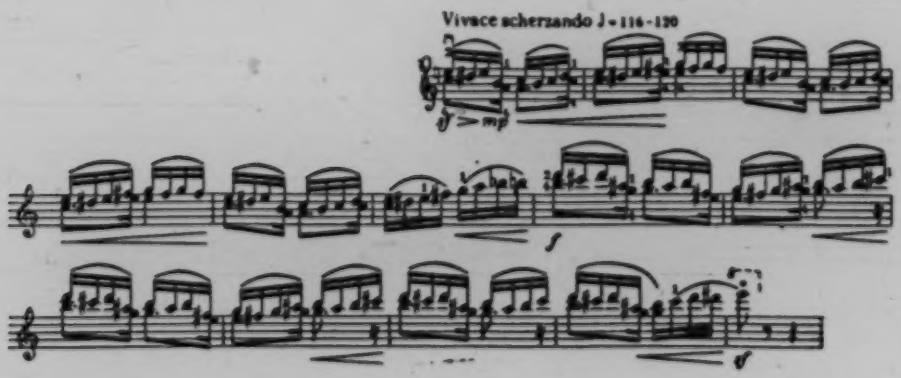
Apart from the "fanfare" and "whole-tone" motives, the other thematic material presented in the first section does not recur. It is in the second section of the concerto that one finds the most important group of themes. Theme A, introduced by the soloist, is the most prominent and easily recognizable:



Ex. 61. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 163-165, violin part.

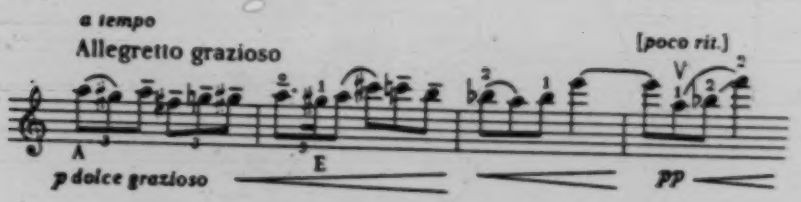
Theme B, characterized by dissonant major sevenths, makes a somewhat tentative first appearance at measure 192, but will later become bolder and more forceful in transformed versions:

Ex. 62. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, m. 192, violin part.

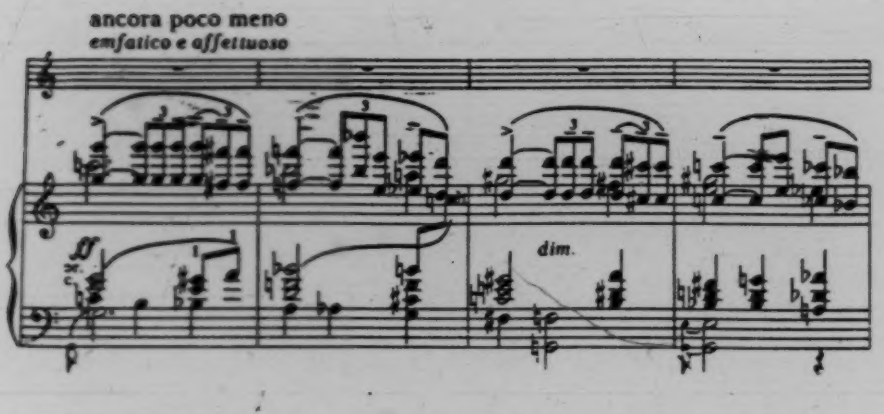
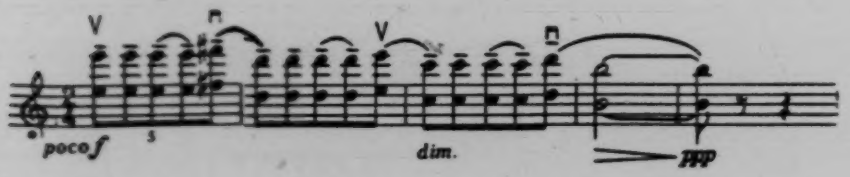
Repetitions and transformations of these themes occur throughout the remainder of the work, notably in the fourth section, where they are presented in augmentation, and in the orchestral climax.

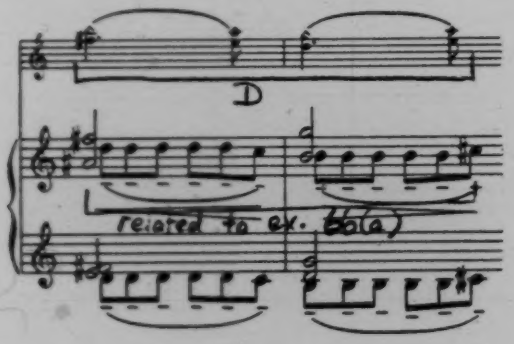
The second section is lyrical; the tenor changes by the time the third section arrives. Virtuosity replaces lyricism and this part of the concerto contains the most demanding technical challenges for the soloist. Highlighting the section is a new theme (labelled the "Scherzando" theme in the outline) which features an interesting combination of double-stops and sixteenth notes that run simultaneously:

Ex. 63. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 272 to 283, violin part.

The first variant of this theme takes the form of triple stops:

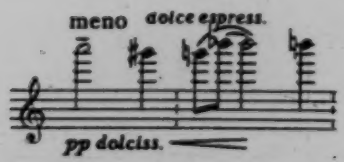
Ex. 64. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 286 to 289, violin part.

The second variant, by contrast, is lyrical:

Ex. 65. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 306 to 309, violin part.

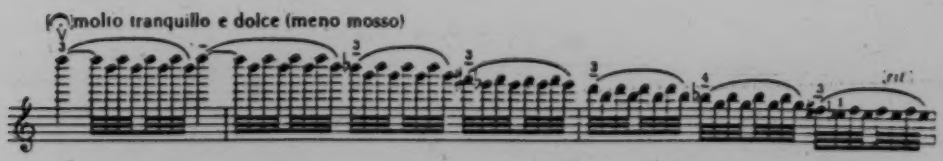
A further variant of the "Scherzando" theme occurs in the fourth section (mm. 364 to 381), which otherwise serves to develop old themes, namely A and B. The fifth section, on the other hand, introduces new material. Theme C (Ex.66b) springs directly out of the transitional passage joining the fourth and fifth sections together (Ex.66a):

Ex. 66(a). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 416 to 419, piano reduction.

Ex. 66(b). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 450 to 453, violin part.

Theme D, likewise, is derived from theme C, if one takes into account the orchestral accompaniment at measure 455:

Ex. 67. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 455 to 456, piano reduction.

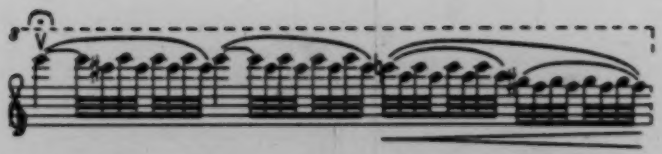
Of this new material, theme D is of somewhat more prominence, given that it makes a brief reappearance in the coda (mm. 656 to 660). Theme C, however, is transformed in both rhythm and character (mm. 487 to 496). In this form, it is used to lead into the final virtuoso section of the concerto (mm. 497 to 552), which contains a recapitulation of the "Scherzando" theme and its variants. This, in turn, leads to the solo cadenza, following a short orchestral interlude.

Kochanski's cadenza is extremely brilliant and effective. For the most part, it is in an improvisatory style, akin to the various rhapsodic solos that Szymanowski composed within the concerto proper. Thematic connections do exist, however; for instance, at measures 566 to 567, where theme B is used in augmentation:

Ex. 68. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, cadenza, mm. 566- 567.

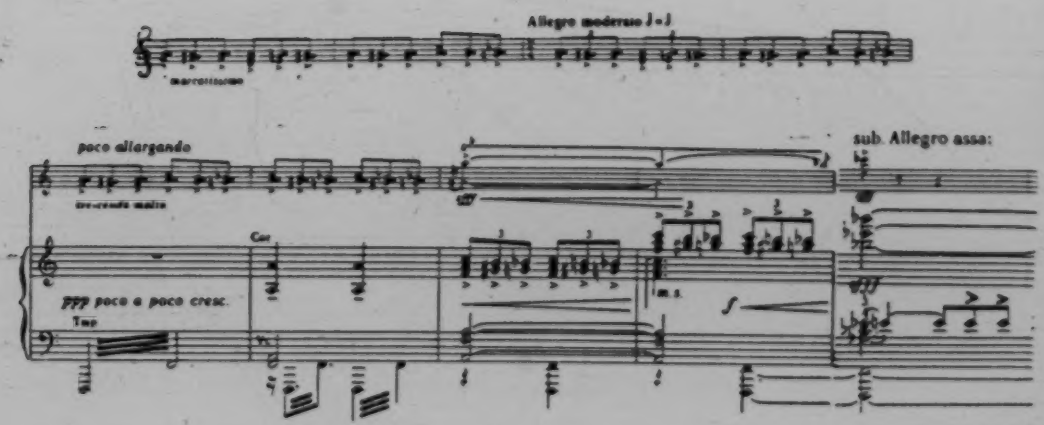
Later, a reference to the first rhapsodic solo is made:



Ex. 69(a). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 52-54, violin part.



Ex. 69(b). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, cadenza, m. 576.

And finally, to conclude and lead into the orchestral climax, Kochanski uses the first variant of the "Scherzando" theme, appropriately giving the cadenza a spectacular finish:

Ex. 70 . Szymanowski, Violin Concerto. No. 1, Op. 35, mm. 585 -593, piano reduction.

The orchestral climax, undoubtedly the culmination of the entire work, makes use of themes A and B, the former accompanied by the "fanfare" motif that was featured at the beginning of the concerto. The orchestration is reminiscent of late Romanticism, an indication that Szymanowski was not entirely free of 19th-century influence, even at this, the most original phase of his career. The style changes almost abruptly at the onset of the coda, which immediately recalls the opening of the concerto. The whole work ends, not with a bang, but on a mere whisper of sound from the double basses on an A natural, thus confirming the concerto's tonality.

The juxtaposition and combination of Romanticism plus Impressionism, succinctly presented in this final section, permeates the entire concerto. The duality of the work's nature has been commented on by several writers, and, judging by Szymanowski's own remarks to Spiess, the composer himself seems to have realized this as well. Duality exists also at another level, namely in the combination of innovation and tradition, or in the composer's words, various "new notes" with "a bit of a return to the old."

Innovation can certainly be seen in the structural organization of the concerto, as has already been extensively noted. If one compares this work with other violin concertos written around the same time, then one can further appreciate the originality of Szymanowski's concept. The flowing, improvisatory

nature of the First Violin Concerto has few parallels in the repertoire.[6] Yet the inclusion of the solo cadenza, written by someone other than the composer, is a throwback to an earlier period; the closest model, chronologically speaking, is the Violin Concerto by Brahms, although in that particular work, the cadenza is not written into the concerto itself.[7] Likewise, the use of an expanded orchestra, which calls for a piano, two harps, and a large assortment of percussion instruments, in addition to the usual winds, brass (including tuba), and strings, is indicative of an interest in a wide range of timbres. This is consistent with Impressionism. But the composer also realized that a solo violin could not project above these large orchestral forces. In a bow to the traditional violin concerto, Szymanowski skilfully thinned the orchestration during the soloist's passages, thus effectively spotlighting the violinist at all times.

Effective, too, is the writing for the solo instrument. Essentially, Szymanowski continued the line of development begun with the Nocturne and Tarantella, and perfected in the *Mythes*. However, the First Violin Concerto is not primarily a virtuoso work. Although flashes of virtuosity occur (e.g., the "Scherzando" theme), the emphasis on lyricism is predominant. Samson notes that "[the] soloist . . . has a calming effect on the orchestra,"[8] in that the violin cantilena seems to function as a pacifying element. Just as the orchestral

---

6 Compare Szymanowski's First Concerto with, say, the violin concertos of Sibelius (1905) and Elgar (1910), both of which were conceived along classical lines in that they follow a three-movement (fast-slow-fast) scheme. Perhaps the closest model to Szymanowski's work is the little-known Violin Concerto (1916) by Frederick Delius (1862-1934), which is also in one movement but, unlike Szymanowski, has elements of sonata-allegro form.

7 As well, Brahms left the cadenza to be improvised by the performer, who happened to be Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) at first. Others subsequently wrote cadenzas for Brahms's Concerto.

8 Samson, 117.

passages seem to reach a climax, the violin enters with long-breathed phrases that distill the tension. Most of these extended melodic passages are written in the upper tessitura, thus ensuring maximum audibility, while at the same time testing the performer's sense of intonation.

With the First Violin Concerto, Szymanowski reached the end of his exploration of the "new mode of expression." Although in his next work for violin he still showed signs of interest in virtuosity, the composer began to revert to traditional ways of writing for the instrument. Fittingly, he set his new work to the music of the Italian violinist whose own innovations made possible Szymanowski's "new mode": Nicolo Paganini.

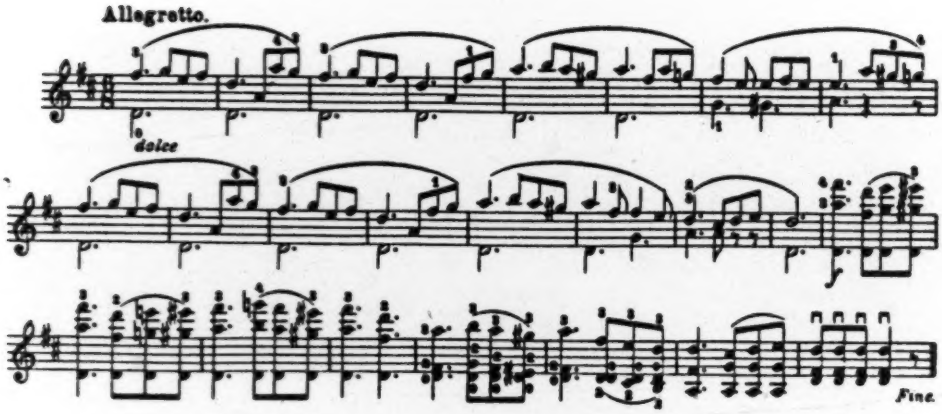
Three Paganini Caprices, Op. 40

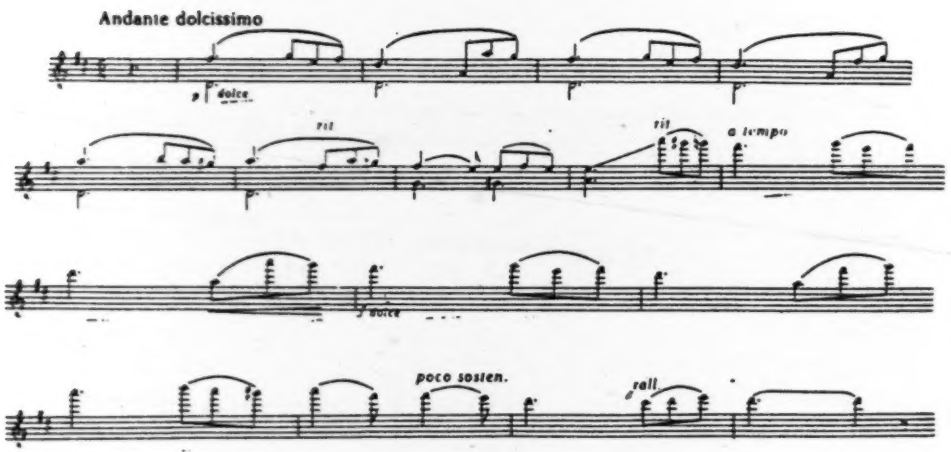
Szymanowski wrote the Three Paganini Caprices in the spring of 1918, in collaboration with the violinist Viktor Goldberg. Although overshadowed by the *Mythes* and the First Violin Concerto, the Caprices are significant nonetheless because they indicate that the composer's interest in the intricacies of writing for the violin was still active (despite the fact that the primary material is not original). As well, this group of works shows the beginnings of a reversion to tonal harmony, a characteristic of Szymanowski's late style.

The motivation behind the writing of these transcriptions is not clear. Certainly, the Three Paganini Caprices represent the only instance when Szymanowski chose to recast the music of another composer. This may have

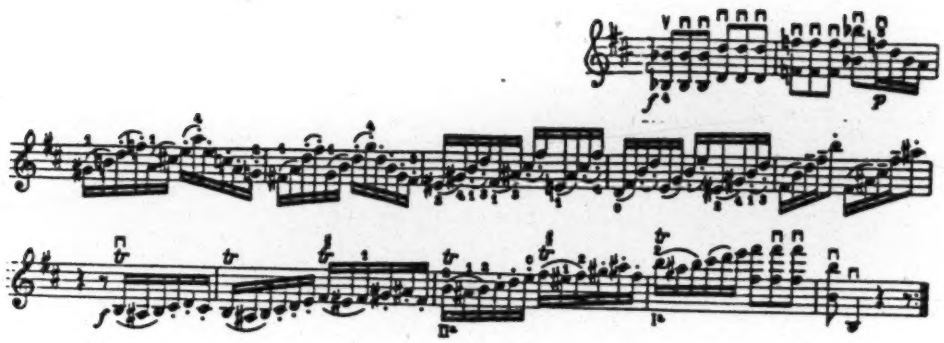
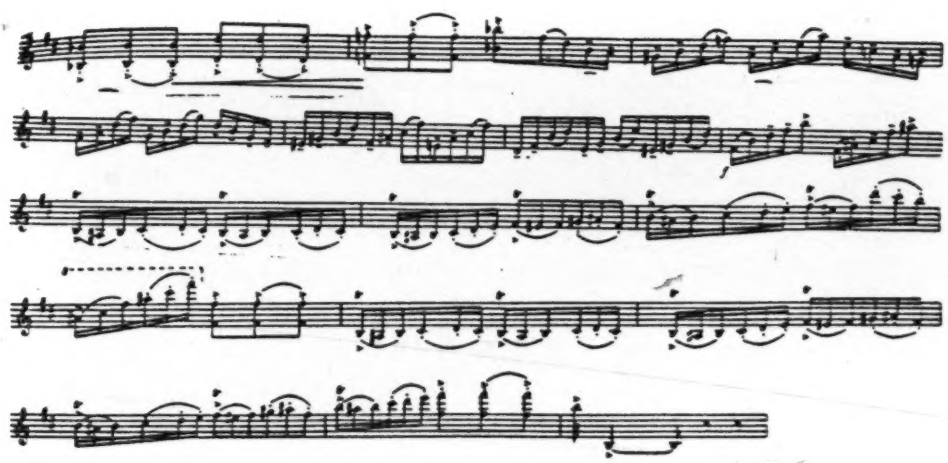
been seen as a challenge, although transcriptions of Paganini's music were already being made and popularized by the violinist-composer, Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), at around the same time. Whatever the reason, Szymanowski's arrangements go beyond the limits of most transcriptions. The overall conception, treatment of the primary material, and harmonic inventiveness are handled in a manner that is more "Szymanowskian" than "Paganinian."

Looking at the Three Paganini Caprices as a whole, it can be seen that Szymanowski conceived them as a set. Thus, the opening caprice, a fairly faithful adaptation of Paganini's Caprice No. 20, functions somewhat as a "first movement;" its ternary design alludes to sonata form. The "second movement," a heavily revised and truncated version of the Twenty-first Caprice, is slow and marked Adagio molto expressivo e affetuoso. The "finale" is based on the famous Twenty-fourth Caprice, and, like the original, is a set of variations on a theme.

Violinists who have studied both versions will be quick to spot noticeable alterations to the violin part. Caprice No. 20 retains most of Paganini's original music. The major differences occur in the A section, where the tempo is slower, the repetition of the theme is taken an octave higher, and a section in triple-stops is completely omitted:

Ex. 71(a). Paganini, Caprice, Op. 1, No. 20, mm. 1 to 24.



Ex. 71(b). Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 20," Op. 40, No. 1, mm. 1 to 16, violin part.

The B section is only slightly altered:

Ex. 72(a). Paganini, Caprice Op. 1, No. 20, mm. 46 to 57.

Ex. 72(b). Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 20," Op. 40, No. 1, mm. 35 to 50, violin part.

Caprice No. 21 is the most revised of the set, as already indicated. The original's bipartite structure concludes with a section marked Presto which features staccato bowing; this is not incorporated in Szymanowski's version. The melodic material that is retained consists only of the first phrase; hence, measures 1 to 9 of Szymanowski's transcription correspond to measure 2 through 10 in Paganini's original. Afterwards, Szymanowski diverges from the primary material, transposing certain parts to different keys and creating new melodic "links" to join phrases together.

The most obvious difference between the original and transcribed versions of Caprice No. 24, apart from the finale, is the order and number of the variations; the following chart compares the original and Szymanowski's transcription:

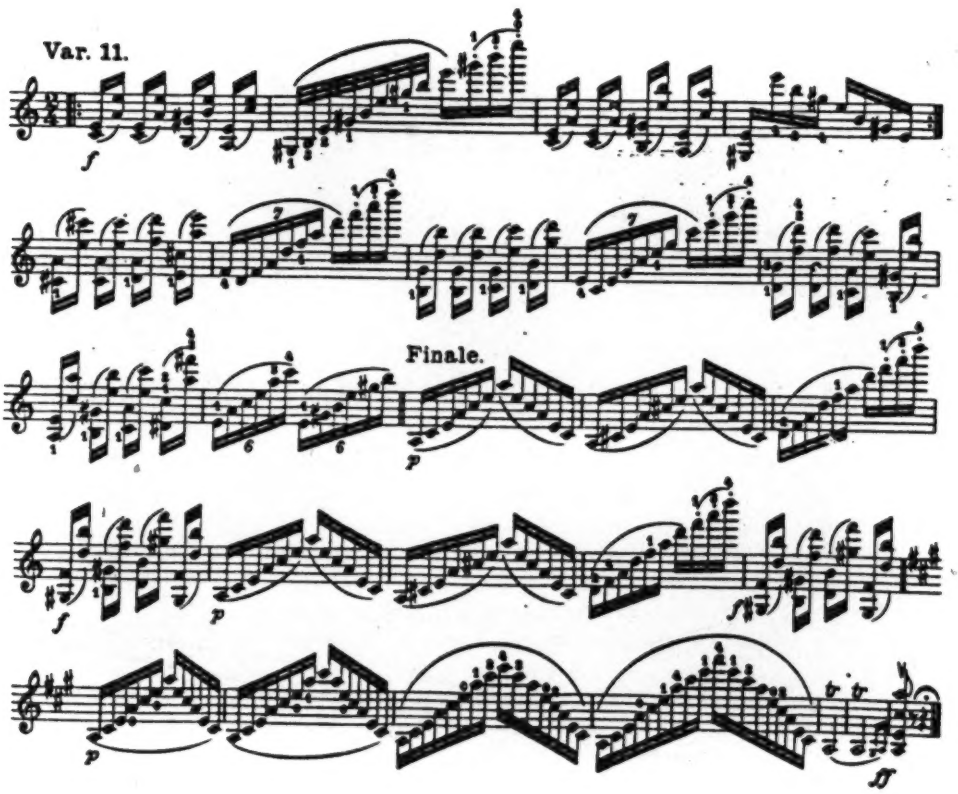
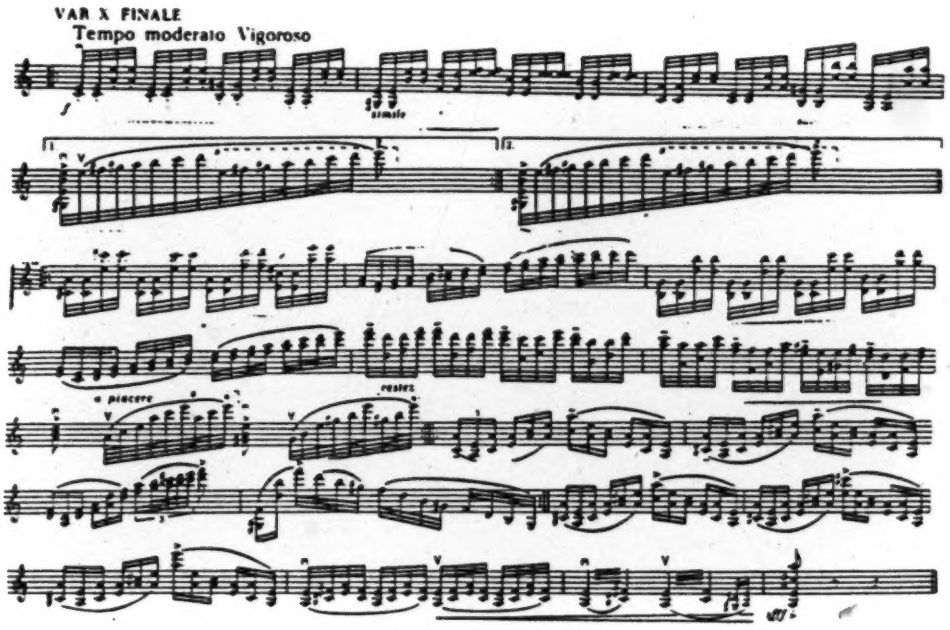
Paganini's original	Szymanowski's version
Theme	Theme
Var. 1 (flying staccato)	Var. 1 (flying staccato)
Var. 2 (rapid string crossings)	Var. 2 (chromatic scales)
Var. 3 (octaves)	Var. 3 (octaves)
Var. 4 (chromatic scales)	Var. 4 (rapid string crossings)
Var. 5 (broken octaves)	Var. 5 (thirds)
Var. 6 (thirds and tenths)	Var. 6 (triplets)
Var. 7 (triplets)	Var. 7 (left-hand pizzicato)

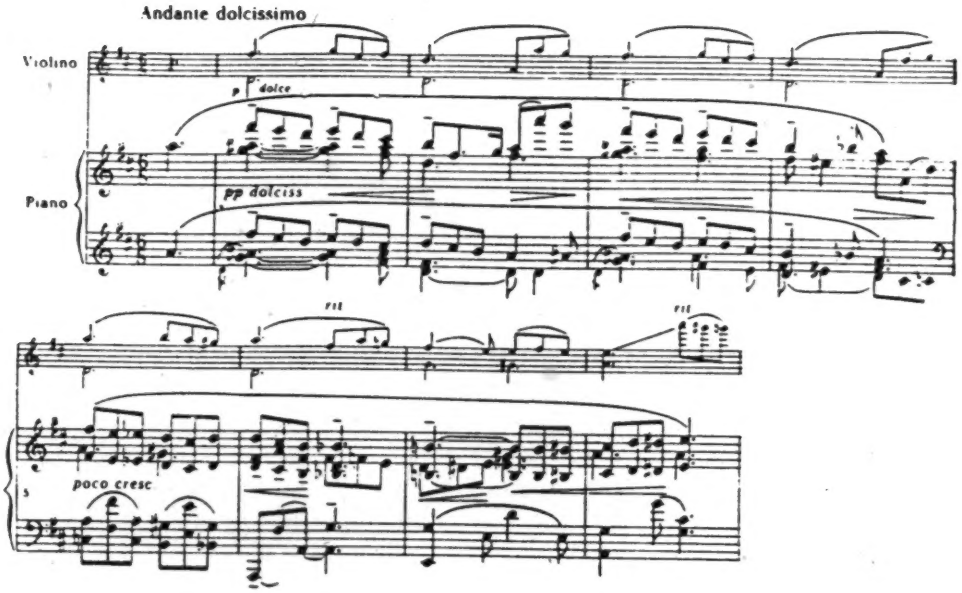
Var. 8 (chords)	Var. 8 (chords)
Var. 9 (left-hand pizzicato)	Var. 9 (harmonics)
Var. 10 (harmonics *ad lib.*)	Var. 10 (finale)
Var. 11 (broken chords and finale)	

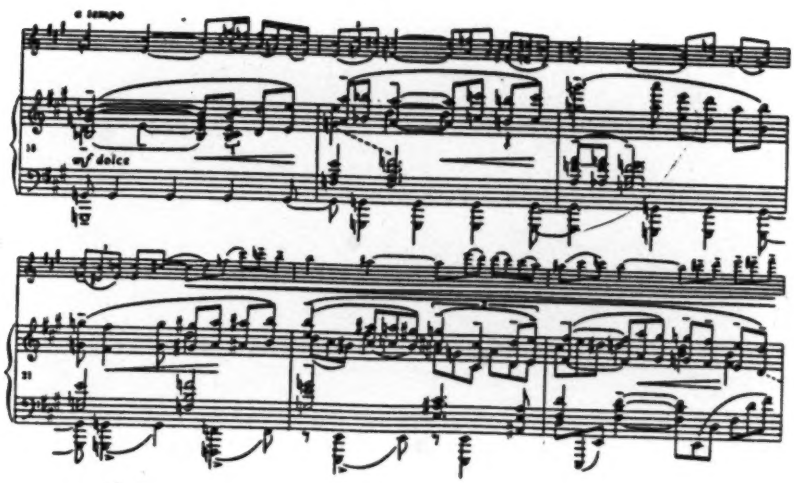
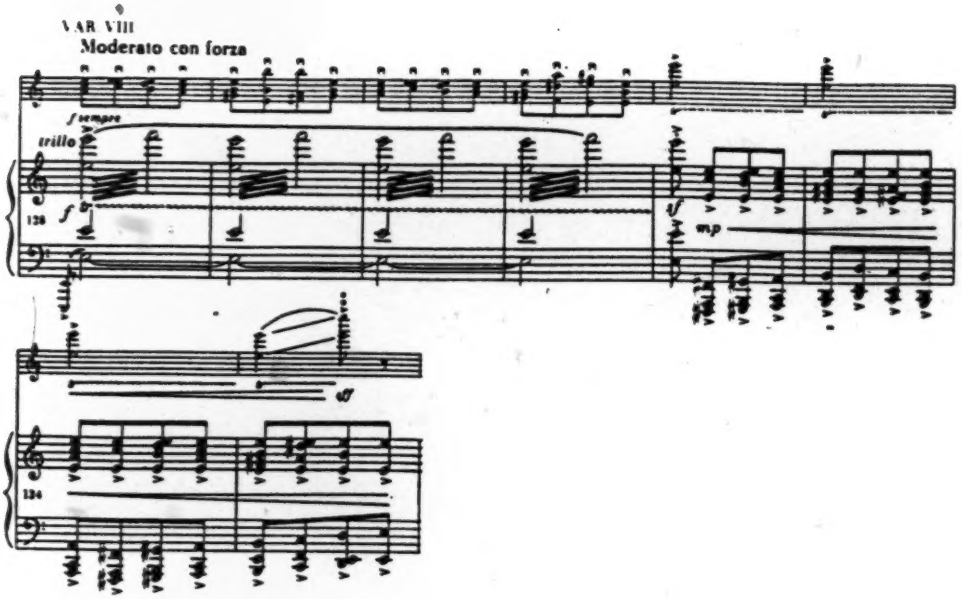
Because of this reshuffling, the transcription acquires a certain drama not found in the original, abetted also by changes of tempo in some of the variations (e.g., Variation III, V, and IX are each marked Andante, which changes the mood, whereas Paganini's original indicates only one tempo--quasi Presto--for the entire set). Alterations to the violin part are less drastic than in Caprice No. 21. The first eight variations adhere closely to their original counterparts. Variation nine is quite different, however; its parallel in Paganini's version is the tenth variation, which is sometimes played in harmonics. It was perhaps this alternate execution that inspired Szymanowski:

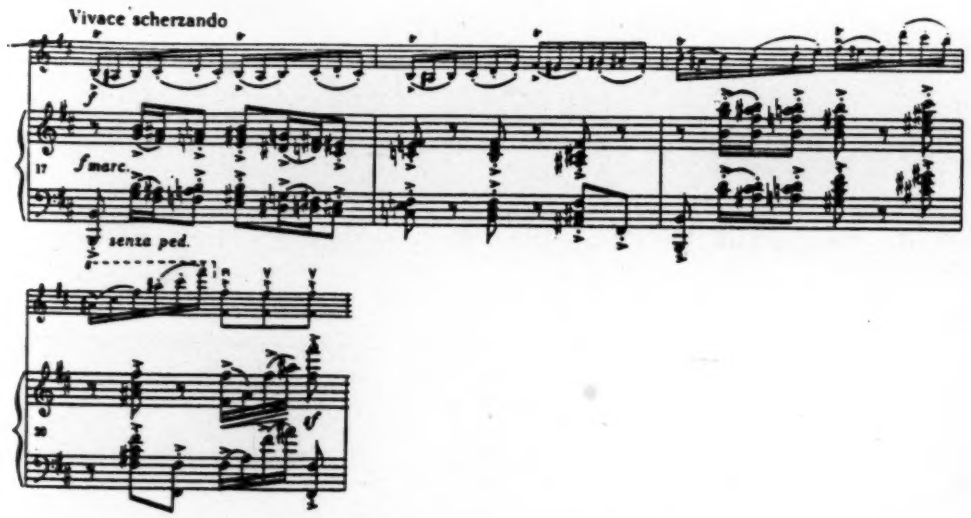
Ex. 73(a). Paganini, Caprice, Op. 1, No. 24, mm. 121-124.

Ex. 73(b). Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 24", Op. 40, No. 3, mm. 145-147.

Szymanowski's finale departs substantially from Paganini's, making even more technical demands on the performer. While the harmonic outline remains the same, the use of double-stops is more advanced:

Ex. 74(a). Paganini, Caprice, Op. 1, No. 24, mm. 131-158, violin part.

Ex. 74(b). Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 24," Op. 40, No. 3, mm. 161-182, violin part.

Harmonically, the Three Paganini Caprices show a return to the tonal world forsaken in the *Mythes* and First Violin Concerto. This return is in part dictated by the primary material, which is tonal in nature. Nevertheless, Szymanowski indulges in extended chromaticism in his piano accompaniments, distorting, at times, the tonality of Paganini's music. The opening of Caprice No. 20 shows this quite clearly:

Ex. 75. Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 20," Op. 40, No. 1, mm. 1-8.

Other inventive touches include the use of free counterpoint, exchange of thematic material between the instruments, and displaced accents.

Ex. 76. Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 21," Op. 40, No. 2, mm. 18-23. Use of free counterpoint.

Ex. 77. Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 24," Op. 40, No. 3, mm. 128-135. Exchange of thematic material.



Ex. 78. Szymanowski, "Caprice No. 20," Op. 40, No. 1, mm. 17-20. Displaced accents.

The transcriptions were Szymanowski's last works which incorporated high virtuosity for the violin. The "new mode of expression," cultivated to a high degree of refinement in the *Mythes* and First Violin Concerto, was soon left behind in favor of a simpler approach to composition. As well, Szymanowski's interest in writing for the violin dwindled, mostly as a result of Kochanski's departure for the United States. It was not until a more than decade later that he would return to the violin, but only at his friend's behest.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NATIONALIST PERIOD: VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 2, OP. 61

The final phase of Szymanowski's creative career was the least productive in terms of violin music. The Second Violin Concerto, written from 1932 to 1933, was the composer's penultimate work, as well as his last orchestral composition. This concerto is predated only by a miniature entitled *La Berceuse d'Aitcho Enio*, written in 1925. The primary reason for this drop in the productivity of violin music was Kochanski's emigration to the United States in 1921. A second reason was Szymanowski's growing interest in other compositional genres, especially vocal music. Nevertheless, the two works that were produced are representative of Szymanowski's late style, a style generally labelled as "Nationalist."

The general characteristics of this new style have already been mentioned in the opening chapter. In short, the most striking differences between the late works and those of the "Impressionist" period are the return to greater tonal clarity, leaner instrumental textures, and, violinistically, more conservative writing. All of these new tendencies are apparent in *La Berceuse d'Aïtcho Enia*, Op. 52, a brief, 60-measure piece in the form of a lullaby for violin and piano. It was written in July of 1925, at the villa of the composer's friend, Dorothy Jordan Robinson, to whom the work is dedicated and whose villa was named "d'Aïtcho Enia." The piece's strongly tonal framework (D major), more traditional harmonies, clear texture, and less rigorous technical demands encapsulate the essence of Szymanowski's late

style. At the same time, the Berceuse's long-breathed phrases once again demonstrate the composer's belief in the importance of melody, a trait that he would continue to stress for the rest of his career. *La Berceuse d'Aïtcho Enia* was given its first performance on 25 October 1925, in Warsaw, by Kochanski and Szymanowski. Since then, it seems to have been forgotten or neglected, but its simple charm makes it a compelling and worthy concert number.

Violin Concerto No. 2 in A minor, Op. 61

Nearly eight years passed between the composition of *La Berceuse d'Aïtcho Enia* and the Second Violin Concerto, Op. 61. In the intervening years, Szymanowski was preoccupied with the production of his opera *King Roger*, as well as directing the Warsaw Conservatory and, later, the Warsaw Academy. In the summer of 1932 came a request from Kochanski for a new concerto. Apparently, and in contrast with the genesis of the First Violin Concerto, Szymanowski was reluctant to comply with this request; he would later claim that "the Second Violin Concerto was squeezed out of me in four weeks by Kochanski."[1] The rough draft was indeed completed in one month, during August of 1932, in close consultation with Kochanski, who was staying with the composer in Zakopane. The orchestration, however, would take more than a year to realize; the full score was finally ready in September, 1933, just in time for the premiere one month later in Warsaw. Sadly, the first performance of this new work proved to be Kochanski's final performance. The violinist had

---

[1] Quoted by Adam Walancinski, "Preface" to *Karol Szymanowski: Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 4 *(Violinkonzerte)* (Krakow: PWM ,1978), vii.

been suffering from cancer for several years; the strain of working on the concerto plus his numerous concert appearances no doubt exacerbated his condition. Pavel Kochanski died in January, 1934, shortly after returning to the United States. Szymanowski dedicated his Second Violin Concerto to his memory with the following inscription on the first page: *A la mémoire du Grand Musicien, mon cher et inoubliable Ami, Paul Kochanski.*

Since its premiere, the Second Violin Concerto has suffered general neglect in comparison with its popular predecessor. To be sure, the Second Concerto has none of the rhapsodic elements nor the inventive virtuosity that characterized the First, yet it is a unique work that epitomizes Szymanowski's aesthetics. Instead of a long and rapturous poem as its inspiration, the Second Violin Concerto incorporates elements of folk music into its fabric. In place of the richly colorful orchestral timbre of the First Concerto, the Second Concerto is much leaner in its orchestration; this is partially reflected in the scoring, which calls for fewer instruments than in the earlier work. As well, the lush and sometimes exotic harmonies of the First Concerto are replaced by a much simpler, more traditional tonal language. And finally, the "new mode of expression" is absent in the new concerto. The technical novelties of the middle period works are abandoned in favor of less spectacular virtuosity. On the technical level, the Second Concerto presents fewer challenges to the soloist, but it is an effective work from the violinistic standpoint. All of these characteristics combine to form a composition that Teresa Chylinska declares to be "of the highest order [and] of the most noble beauty."[2]

---

2 Teresa Chylinska, *Szymanowski: His life and Works* (Los Angeles: Friends of Polish Music, 1993), 276.

The Second Concerto, like the First, is cast in a continuous, flowing structure. But unlike the First, it is more easily divisible: there are two discernible movements, separated by Kochanski's cadenza (yet another similarity to the First Concerto). The first movement is in ternary form and the second is an extended rondo.

FIRST MOVEMENT (mm. 1 to 284), ternary form

A section: measures 1 to 187

Mm. 1 - 6	Orchestral introduction. Tonality of A minor established.
Mm. 7 - 16	Theme *A* played by solo violin.
Mm. 17 - 28	Theme *A* extended.
Mm. 29 - 36	Theme *B*, played by violin, acts as countersubject to theme *A* played by bassoon (mm. 29 to 31), then trumpet (mm. 33 to 36).
Mm. 37 - 48	Theme *C* and variant.
Mm. 49 - 56	Theme *B* accompanied by theme *C*.
Mm. 57 - 60	Theme *C*.
Mm. 61 - 72	Theme *A* in woodwinds, accompanied by virtuoso passages in solo violin part.
Mm. 73 - 85	Theme *A* (solo violin) varied and extended with virtuoso embellishments.
Mm. 86 - 93	Transitional passage.
Mm. 94 - 101	Theme *A* played in triple stops by solo violin.
Mm. 102 - 111	Theme *A* varied.

Mm. 112 - 121	Virtuoso transitional passage.
Mm. 122 - 128	Rhythmic variant of theme *A*.
Mm. 129 - 156	Longer virtuoso transitional passage leading to orchestral interlude.
Mm. 157 - 187	Orchestral interlude (themes *A*, *B*, and *C*).

B section: measures 188 to 255

Mm. 188 - 194	Theme *D* (*Andante sostenuto*) presented by solo violin.
Mm. 195 - 201	Short transitional passage based on theme *D*.
Mm. 202 - 213	Theme *E* (*Sostenuto*) presented by solo violin.
Mm. 214 - 218	Short transition.
Mm. 219 - 225	Theme *D*, played *sul G* by solo violin.
Mm. 226 - 234	Short transition, in double stops, played by solo violin.
Mm. 235 - 255	Virtuoso section (*poco piu mosso, animato*).

A section: measures 256 to 284

-- orchestral recapitulation (abridged). Themes *A* (mm. 256 to 268), *B* (mm. 269 to 276), and *C* (mm. 277 to 284) presented by the full orchestra.

CADENZA (by P. Kochanski): measures 285 to 372

SECOND MOVEMENT (mm. 373 to 686), rondo form

A section: measures 373 to 441

Mm. 373 - 376	Rhythmic accompaniment set up by orchestra.
Mm. 377 - 393	Rondo (first) theme (*molto energico, con spirito*) presented by solo violin.
Mm. 394 - 416	Second presentation of rondo theme, one octave higher and extended with virtuoso scalar passages.
Mm. 417 - 427	Rondo theme taken up by orchestra.
Mm. 428 - 442	Orchestral transition to section B; motifs from rondo theme used as accompaniment.

B section: measures 443 to 465

Mm. 443 - 456	Second theme (*Poco meno, allegretto, tranquillo*) presented by solo violin.
Mm. 457 - 465	Transitional passage, based on virtuoso passages of the rondo theme.

A section (varied): measures 466 to 514

Mm. 466 - 473	Rondo theme, embellished with open strings.
Mm. 474 - 495	Rondo theme, melodically altered.
Mm. 496 - 514	Transitional passage played by solo violin. Imitation of two fiddles playing in heterophony(?); folk-inspired passage.

C section: measures 525 to 550

Mm. 515 - 524	Third theme (*Andantino molto tranquillo*).
Mm. 525 - 532	Third theme repeated an octave higher and modified.
Mm. 533 - 550	Transitional passage.

A section: measures 551 to 588

Mm. 551 - 554	Motif from rondo theme in lower strings.
Mm. 555 - 580	Rondo theme, played *saltando* by solo violin and transposed to various keys. Accompanying strings also play *saltando*.
Mm. 581 - 588	Transitional passage.

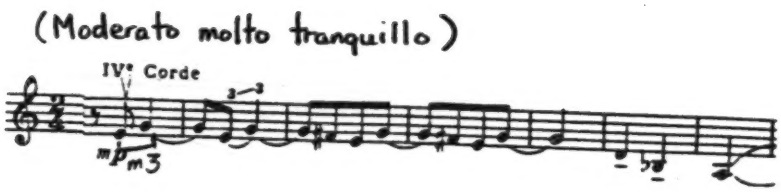
D section: measures 589 to 658

Mm. 589 - 622	Theme *A* from first movement, in A major.
Mm. 623 - 658	Transitional passage (*Poco piu tranquillo*), featuring double stops for the solo violin. Fragments of theme *A* used (mm. 651 to 658).

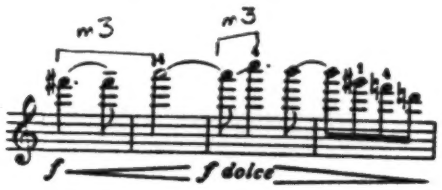
Coda: measures 659 to 686.

The first section is characterized by motivic unity among its themes. Theme *A*, which opens the work, is the most prominent. Themes *B* and *C*, though labelled differently, bear a certain kinship to theme *A*; the use of the rising minor third, which can be found in all three of the themes, acts as the

unifying element.



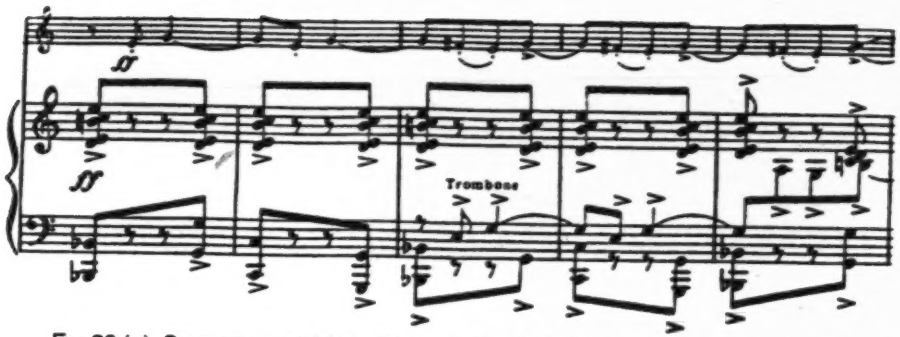
Ex. 79 (a). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 7-13, violin part, theme *A*.



Ex. 79 (b). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 29-32, violin part, theme *B*.

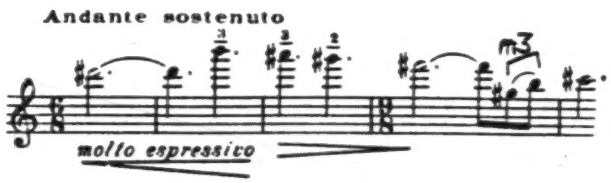
Ex. 79 (c). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 37-40, violin part, theme *C*.

Theme *A* itself, as presented by the soloist, is also transformed through the use of different orchestral backgrounds; this, in turn, alters its musical character, which initially began tenderly but later (measures 73 to 79, 94 to 101) becomes military and more virtuoso in nature.



Ex. 80 (a). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 73-79, piano reduction.

Ex. 80 (b). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 94-101, violin part.

After some extensive virtuoso transitional passages, Szymanowski provides an orchestral interlude (measures 157 to 187) as a link to the B section, a procedure that was utilised in the First Concerto. Lyricism is the main characteristic of the B section, which is in E major, and both themes *D* and *E* show this in abundance:

Ex. 83 (a). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 187-191, violin part, theme D.

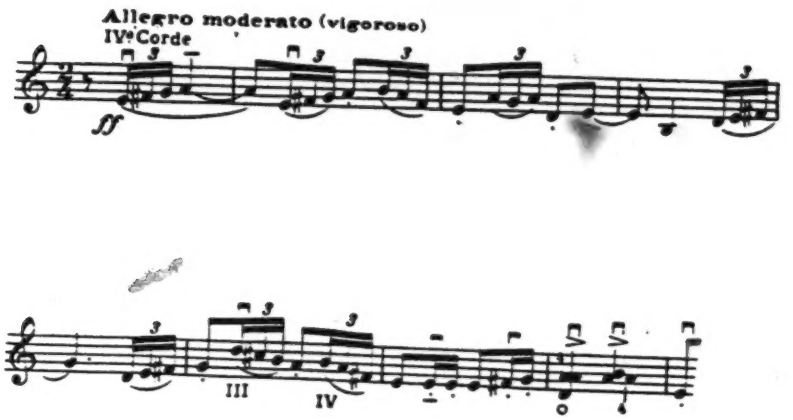
Ex. 83 (b). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 202-205, violin part, theme *E*.

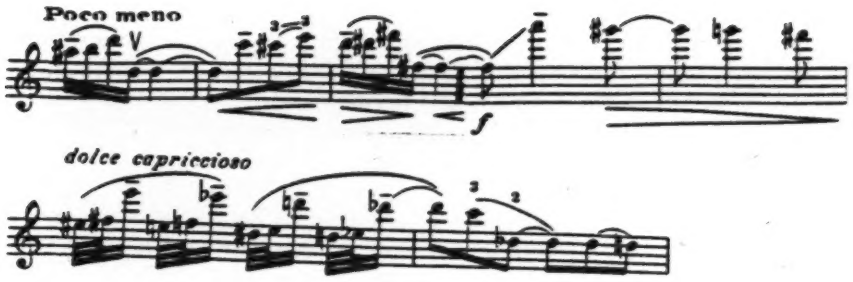
Again, the unifying interval of a minor third is present, thus helping to establish a link with the thematic material of the A section.

A second virtuoso passage (measures 235 to 255), featuring double stops for the soloist, serves as the link to an abridged recapitulation played by the orchestra. Thereafter, the rather extensive cadenza by Kochanski is presented. Surprisingly, it makes very little reference to previous thematic material; only a few measures allude to theme *A*:

Ex. 82. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 317-320, violin part.

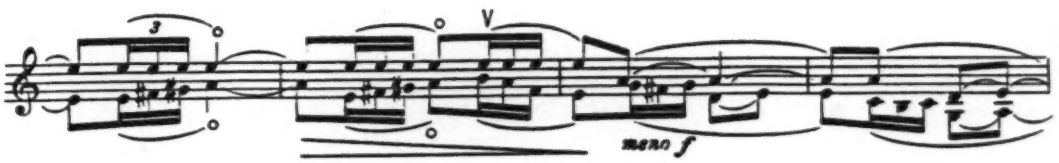
The bulk of the cadenza is almost exclusively in double stops, with extensive use of fourths and fifths played in sixteenths and triplets. The whole cadenza has an improvisatory quality about it.

The cadenza moves immediately into the Concerto's second movement, a rondo that alternates between an energetic dance and episodes of lyricism. The rondo theme is presented by the soloist at the onset; its rhythmic vitality suggests, possibly, a folk dance:

Ex. 83. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 377-384, violin part.

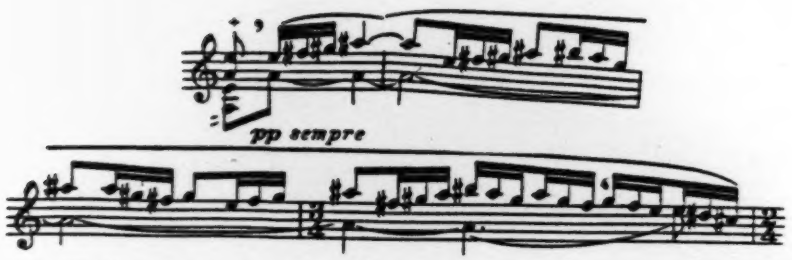
The orchestra picks up on this theme after the soloist repeats it an octave higher and adds a few virtuoso passages. A brief orchestral transition leads to the B part, which features a second theme that has both lyrical and whimsical elements:

Ex. 84. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 443-449, violin part.

The measure marked *dolce capriccioso*, along with its accompaniment, briefly recalls the fantasy world of the First Concerto.

The second presentation of the rondo theme, from measures 466 to 514, is not a literal repetition of the first statement, as may be expected if one went according to a conventional treatment of the rondo form. Instead, Szymanowski varies the rondo theme twice, first through embellishments featuring opening strings (Ex. 85a), then by melodic alterations which create the jarring dissonances that suggest Goral influence (Ex. 85b):

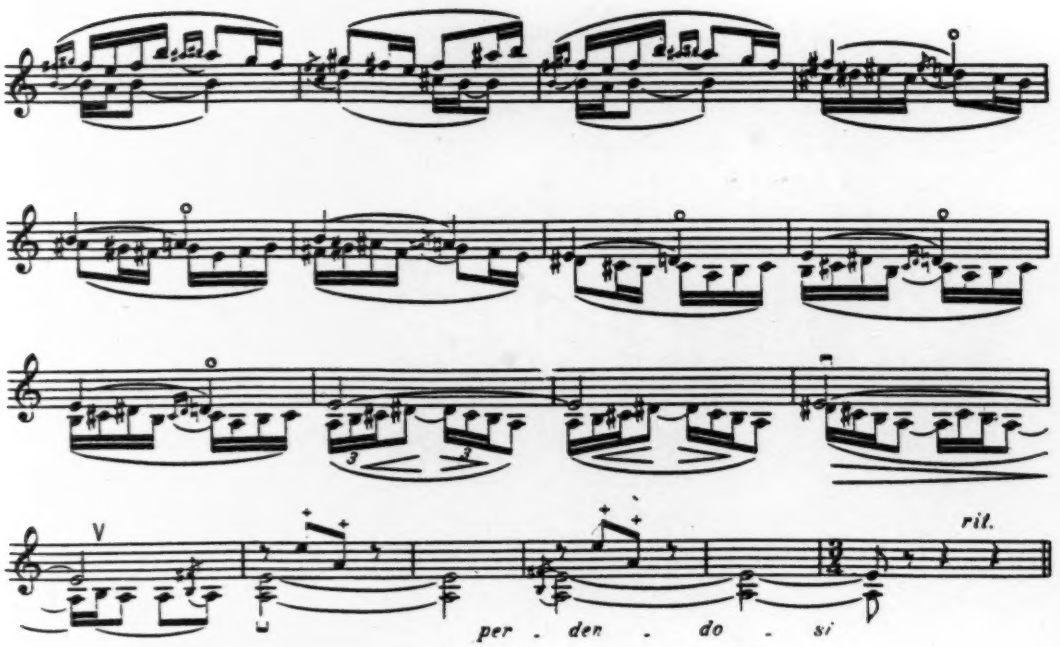


Ex. 85 (a). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 466-469, violin part.

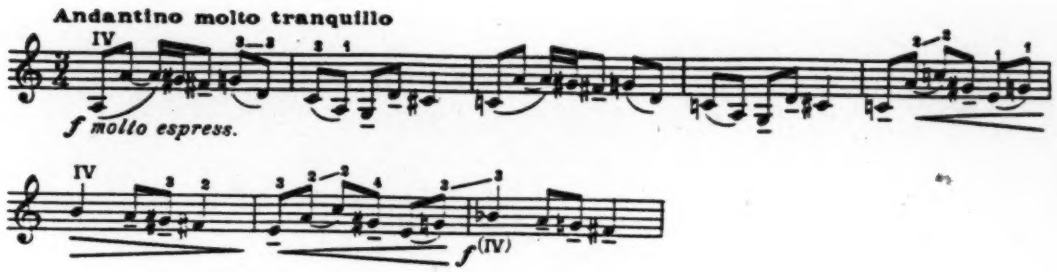


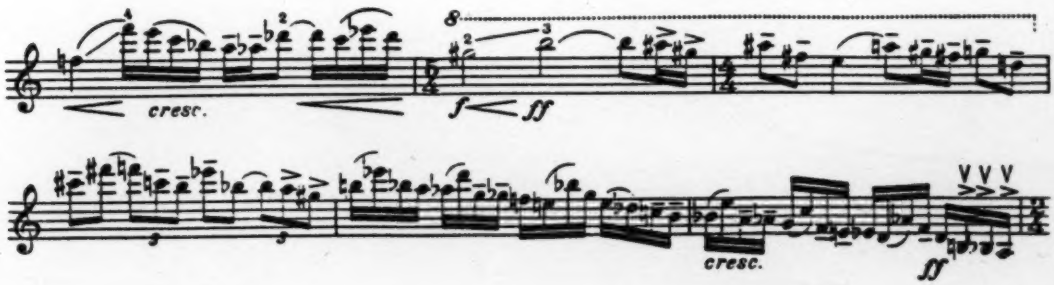
Ex. 85 (b). Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 474-477, violin part.

Later, at measures 496 to 514, there appears another passage that has folkloristic flavor and which constitutes one of the more difficult moments in the concerto:



Ex. 86. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 496-514, violin part.

The above passage acts as a bridge into the next section. Lyricism prevails again, as shown by the third theme which has a rather Romantic tinge:

Ex. 87. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 515-522, violin part.

It would seem, on the basis of this passage, that the early influence of Romanticism had not completely been left behind, even at this late stage of Szymanowski's career. Nor, for that matter, is the rhapsodic quality of the middle period works totally absent, judging by the transitional passage which follows:

Ex. 88. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 545-550, violin part.

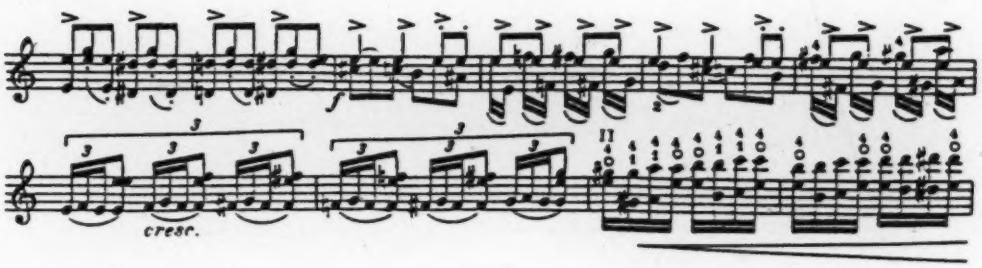
The third presentation of the rondo theme is an abridged version of the opening presentation; it is slightly varied with a few virtuoso techniques such as *saltando* bowing and left-hand *pizzicato*. A short transition leads to the D section, which utilises theme *A* from the first movement:

Ex. 89. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 589-594, violin part.

The use of this theme in the concerto's finale gives the entire work unification. It is reminiscent of the cyclical procedure encountered in the last movement of the Violin Sonata, and another example that the Romantic influence was still alive in Szymanowski's musical thinking. The coda which follows, in contrast with that of the First Concerto, concludes the work with virtuoso flair.

A few remarks concerning the overall texture and harmonies incorporated in this concerto are in order. The use of counterpoint--up to this point not a salient feature of Szymanowski's style--is quite pervasive in this work. The first section, especially, is characterized by numerous passages which use imitation and stretto. As well, the introduction of certain themes (e.g., theme B at measure 29) is accompanied by a previous theme, thus making the new material act as a countersubject. All of this thematic material is harmonized using clearly defined triads built on the key of A minor. The opening measures,

for example, articulate this harmonic frame despite the slight chromaticism. But at the same time, the use of modes--particularly Dorian and Lydian, the latter being characteristic of Goral folk music--is prevalent. Lydian mode is the basis of the rondo theme of the second section (mm. 377 to 393), while the opening theme of the first section is in Dorian.

Violinistically, the Second Concerto eschews the novelties that characterized works such as the *Mythes* and the First Concerto. The writing is more traditional; the idioms used are more in line with those found in the standard works of nineteenth-century violinist-composers, but without the rigor. This is not to say that the work is devoid of virtuosity; on the contrary, there are numerous passages that are highly effective and virtuosic in nature. For example:

Ex. 90. Szymanowski, Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, mm. 63-72, violin part.

Other examples include the aforementioned "folkloristic" passage (Ex. 86) and the transitional passages which connect the various sections together. All of these demand a high level of technical competence. In the end, however, the Second Concerto should be regarded as a final lyrical essay by a composer who stressed lyricism throughout his music for the violin.

CONCLUSION

It cannot be claimed that Szymanowski's musical style exerted a huge influence on composers in the twentieth century. Indeed, he has largely been repudiated by the later generations, even by those who came from Poland. Witold Lutoslawski (1913-1994), while acknowledging an early indebtness to Szymanowski, ultimately rejected the older composer's "post-Romantic aesthetic" in favor of the more progressive streams of twentieth-century music as represented by Bartók and Prokofiev.[3] The same may be said of another famous Polish composer, Krzysztof Penderecki (1933-), whose musical predilections are far removed from those of Szymanowski.

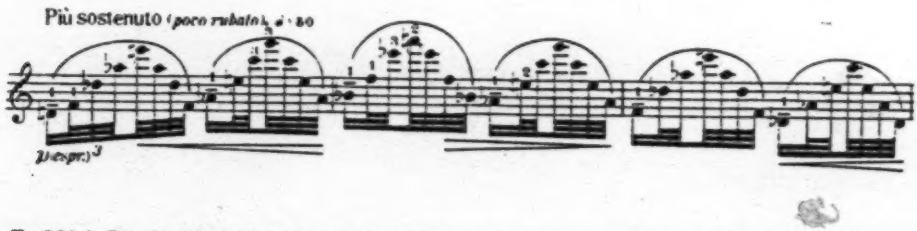
Though his musical style was limited in its influence, Szymanowski's "new mode of expression for the violin"--brought to fruition in his middle period--has had a more far-reaching impact. One of the first composers to be impacted was Béla Bartók (1881-1945), whose own violin music shows signs of having been modelled on the Polish composer's examples. We know that Bartók ordered all of Szymanowski's available violin music from Universal Publishers sometime in 1921, and that in the same year (November 12) he performed the *Mythes* with the Hungarian violinist Zoltan Székely.[4] Also in 1921, Bartók commenced work on his First Violin Sonata, which owes much to Szymanowski's "new mode of expression" in its handling of the violin writing.

---

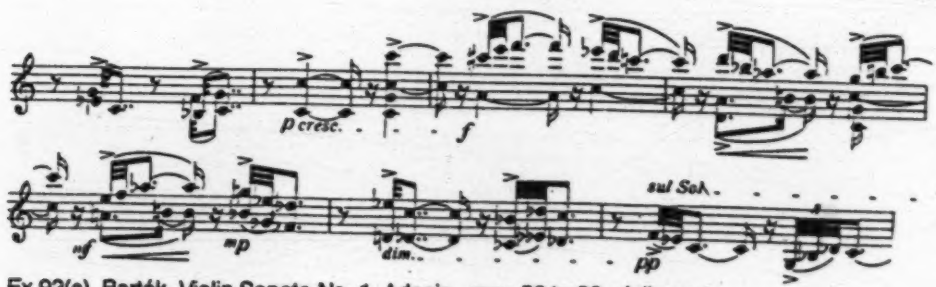
[3] Jean-Paul Couchard, *La musique polonaise et Witold Lutoslawski*. (Paris: Editions Stock, 1981), 72-73.

[4] János Kárpáti, *Bartók's Chamber Music* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1994), 297-298.

There are several points of comparison between this Sonata and Szymanowski's music. The general lyricism prevailing the first two movements may have been inspired by the Polish composer's overall approach to writing for the violin. More specifically, certain details in the Sonata's violin part can be related to parts of Szymanowski's "Impressionist" works. The use of rapid arpeggios, tremolando, and unusual double-stop combinations pays homage to passages from the *Mythes*.



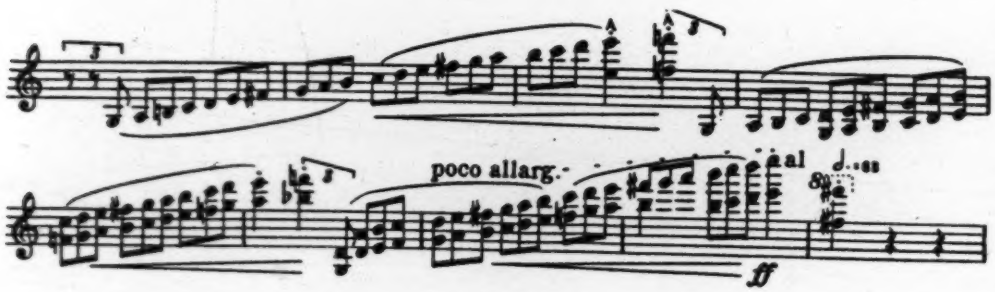
Ex.92(a) Bartók, Violin Sonata No. 1, Allegro appassionato, mm. 60 to 62, violin part.

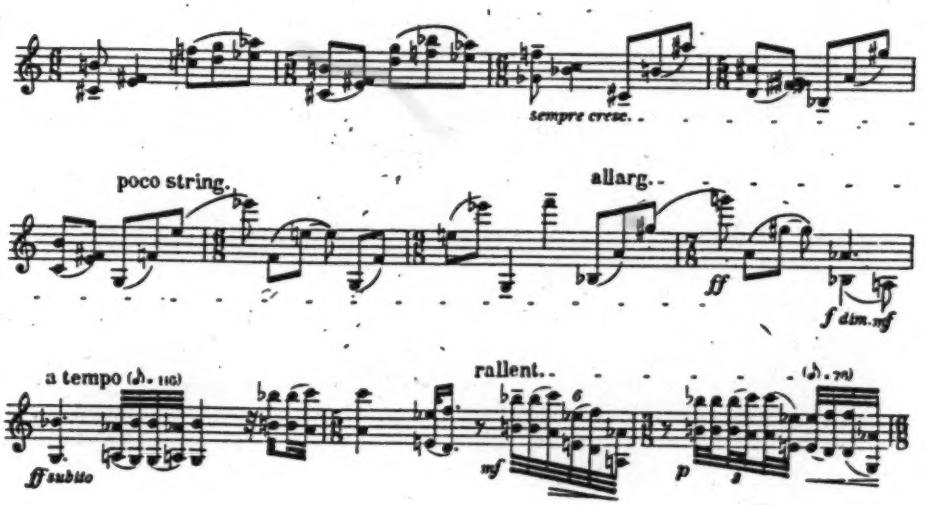
Ex.92(b) Bartók, Violin Sonata No. 1, Allegro appassionato, mm. 115 to 117, violin part.

Ex.92(c) Bartók, Violin Sonata No. 1, Adagio , mm. 56 to 62, violin part.

As well, Bartók's handling of texture is reminiscent of Szymanowski. For example, in the first movement, the use of the violin's high register, combined with ostinato figures in the piano part, recalls not only the *Mythes* but the Nocturne as well.

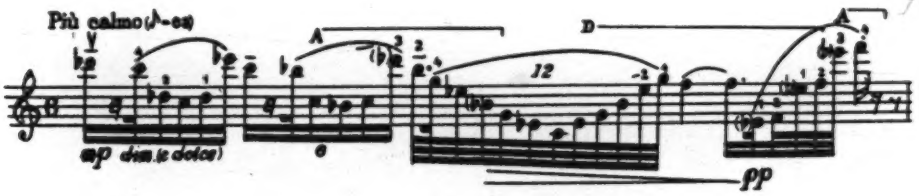
Bartók's later violin music also contains devices that are Szymanowskian in design. The most obvious of these is found in the Second Violin Concerto (1937-38), where the use of quarter-tones in the first movement harks back to the opening of "Dryads et Pan" from the *Mythes*:

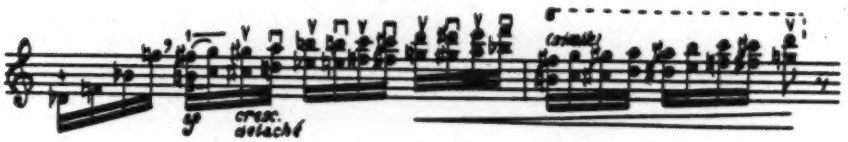
Ex. 93. Bartók, Violin concerto No. 2, Allegro non troppo, mm. 303 to 308, violin part.

Also striking is the use of perfect fifths near the end of the third movement, which is clearly derived from the opening of the Nocturne:

Ex. 94. Bartók, Violin concerto No. 2, Allegro molto, mm. 581 to 589, violin part.

The use of other dissonant double-stops, in particular seconds and sevenths, are present in the first movement of the Second Sonata (1922):

Ex. 95. Bartók, Violin Sonata No. 2, Molto moderato, mm. 92 to 103, violin part.

The influence of Szymanowski on Bartók's violin music is definite, but could the "new mode of expression" also have had an impact on other composers? This is possible, although documentary evidence was not found by the author. Nevertheless, certain passges from later works for the violin seem to suggest the probable and perhaps definite influence of Szymanowski. For example, in the Sonata for Solo Violin (1951) by the Isreali composer Paul

Ben-Haim (1897-1984), passages incorporating arpeggios based on unusual chords and perfect fifths can be found:

Ex. 96(a). Paul Ben-Haim, Sonata for Solo Violin, Lento e sotto voce, m. 20.



Ex. 96(b). Paul Ben-Haim, Sonata for Solo Violin, Molto Allegro, mm. 108-109.

The use of quarter tones--probably Szymanowski's most lasting innovation--has been utilised extensively by later composers. In addition to Bartók, quarter tones can be found in the music of the violinist-composer Eugene Ysaÿe (1858-1924; Sonata No. 3 for solo violin, Op. 27, No. 3, the so-called "Ballade", written in 1924) and Lutoslawski (Partita for violin and piano, 1984). A more exhaustive study focusing on the impact of the "new mode" may reveal other passages or works influenced by Szymanowski; the few examples I have provided here give only a slight indication that the "new mode of expression" may have been far-reaching.

In conclusion, Szymanowski's violin music charts the composer's course of development clearly. From the late Romantic beginnings of the Violin Sonata and the Romance, he reached his creative apex with the four middle period works that have remained staples of the violin repertoire. These works also demonstrated a novel approach to writing for the violin that was based on pre-existing idioms, but were refurbished by Szymanowski and his friend Kochanski to suit 20th-century musical ideals. This "new mode of expression" may have provided several later composers with a model on which to base their own violin music. This model may still be in use even today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Abraham, Gerald. *Essays on Russian and East European Music.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Chominski, Jozef. *Studia Nad Tworczoscia Karola Szymanowskiego.* Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne (PWM), 1969.

Chylinska, Teresa. *Szymanowski.* New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1973.

_____. "Szymanowski" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* , ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980.

_____. *Karol Szymanowski: His Life & Works.* Los Angeles: Friends of Polish Music, 1993.

Couchoud, Jean-Paul. *La musique polonaise et Witold Lutoslawski.* Paris: Editions Stock, 1981.

Grieve, Tyrone. "Szymanowski's Violin Sonata: An Introduction and Some Performing Suggestions." *Strad* 92 (Feb., 1982): 740-42

Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942.

Kárpáti, Janos. *Bartók's Chamber Music.* New York: Pendragon Press, 1994.

Kenneson, Claude. *Székely and Bartók: The Story of a Friendship.* Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994.

Kolneder, Walter. *The Amadeus Book of the Violin: Construction, History, and Music,* trans. and ed. Reinhard G. Pauly. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1998.

Lantz, Lisa Elizabeth. *The Violin Music of Karol Szymanowski: A Review of the Repertoire and Stylistic Features.* Ohio State University: DMA Thesis, 1994.

Maciejewski, B. M. *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Music.* London: Poets' and Painters' Press, 1967.

_____. *Karol Szymanowski and Jan Smeterlin: Correspondence and Essays.* London: Allegro Press, 1969.

Michalowski, Kornel. *Karol Szymanowski: Thematic Catalogue of Works and Bibliography.* Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne (PWM), 1967.

Morgan, Robert P. *Twentieth-Century Music.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991.

Morris, Mark. *A Guide to 20th Century Composers.* London: Methuen London, 1996.

Palmer, Christopher. *Szymanowski.* London: BBC Music Guides, 1983.

Roeder, Michael Thomas. *A History of the Concerto.* Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994.

Roth, Henry. *Violin Virtuosos: From Paganini to the 21st Century.* Los Angeles: California Classic Books, 1997.

Rheinhold, Ilona. *Begegnung mit Karol Szymanowski.* Leipzig: P. Reclam, Inc., 1982.

Rubinstein, Artur. *My Young Years.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1973.

Samson, Jim. *The music of Szymanowski.* New York and London: Kahn and Averill, 1981.

_____. *Music in Transition: A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality, 1900 - 1920.* New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1977.

Sierpinski, Zdzislaw, ed. *Karol Szymanowski. An Anthology.* Warsaw: Interpress Publishers 1986.

Veinus, Abraham. *The Concerto.* New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964.

Walancinski, Adam. "Preface" to *Karol Szymanowski: Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 4 *(Violinkonzerte).* Krakow: PWM, 1978.

_____. "Preface" to *Karol Szymanowski: Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 9 *(Werke für Violine und Klavier).* Krakow: PWM, 1978.

Wightman, Alistair. "Szymanowski and Islam." *Musical Times* 128 (Mar., 1987): 129-132.

_____. "Szymanowski, Bartok and the Violin." *Musical Times* 122 (Mar., 1981): 159-163.

Wilk, Wanda. *Szymanowski.* Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1982.

B. MUSICAL SCORES

Bartók, Béla. *Première Sonate pour violon et piano.* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1923.

_____. *Deuxième Sonata pour violon et piano.* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1924.

_____. *Violin Concerto No. 2.* London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1945.

Ben-Haim, Paul. *Sonata in G for Violin Solo.* Tel Aviv: Israel Music Publishers Ltd.,1954.

Brahms, Johannes. *Sonaten für Klavier und Violine.* Vienna: G. Henle Verlag, 1962.

Bruch, Max. *Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26.* New York: Carl Fischer, 1914.

Franck, César. *Sonata in A major for violin and piano.* New York: International Music Company, 1958.

Paganini, Nicolo. *24 Caprices for violin, Op. 1.* New York: International Music Company, 1956.

Szymanowski, Karol. *Gesamtausgabe, vol. 9 (Werke für Violine und Klavier).* Krakow: PWM, 1978.

_____. *Sonate pour violon et piano, Op. 9.* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1994.

_____. *Romance Op. 23 pour Violon et Piano.* Vienna: Universal Edition,1912.

_____. *Notturno e Tarantella pour violon et piano, Op. 28.* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1921.

_____. *Mythes: Trois Poèmes, Op. 30 (1. La fontaine d'Arethuse).* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1994.

_____. *Mythes: Trois Poèmes, Op. 30 (2. Narcisse).* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1948.

_____. *Mythes: Trois Poèmes, Op. 30 (3. Dryades et Pan).* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1994.

_____. *I. Concert for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35* (Piano Reduction). Vienna: Universal Edition, 1921.

_____. *La Berceuse d'Aïtacho Enia, Op. 52.* Vienna: Universal Edition, 1953.

_____. *Deuxieme Concerto pour violon et orchestre , Op. 61*(Réduction pour Piano et Violon). Paris: Editions Max Eschig, 1934.

Ysaÿe, Eugène. *Six Sonates pour violon seul, Op. 27.* G. Schirmer, Inc., New York, 1924.